

LIT 3003: The Forms of Narrative - Narrating the Ineffable

Section 025F

Instructor: Cristina Ruiz-Poveda

Email: cruizpoveda@ufl.edu

Meetings: MTWRF Period 5 (2-3:15pm) at TUR 2350

Office hours: MW 3:15-4 pm, and by appointment at TUR 4415

"Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."

From Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*

The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao

The name that can be named is not the eternal name

From Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*

Course description:

Storytelling is such an inherent part of human experience that we often overlook how narratives, even those which may be foundational to our world views, are articulated. This course serves as an introduction to narrative forms, as well as a critical exploration of the potential of *narratology*—the theory of narrative—to analyze stories of ineffable experiences. How do narratives convey elusive existential and spiritual concepts? Are there shared formal and procedural traits of such narratives?

In this class, we will learn the foundations of narratology, so as critically analyze how different narrative media (literature, visual culture, film, etc.) represent intense but seemingly incommunicable human experiences. These stories will serve as a vehicle to explore the limits of storytelling and to analyze narrative strategies at those limits. Students will also experiment with different forms of narrative through creative activities. Please note: this is not a course in religion or religious art history. This course is a survey of narratology: it offers theoretical tools to analytically understand narratives *about* profound existential concerns and transcendental experiences.

Course goals and outcomes: by the end of the semester you should be able to...

- Articulate how narratives create meanings through different elements and strategies
- Understand a wide variety of cultural artifacts (visual, film, new media...) as narrative texts
- Analyze any type of narrative text critically
- Confront, accept, and appreciate the diversity of understandings and portrayals of the ineffable in different cultural artifacts and contexts
- Define the ineffable in your own terms
- Adapt your writing style to varied genres and audiences
- Understand your own experience as a member of the audience
- Be aware of the power of narrative as a cultural product rather than a form of entertainment

Course materials:

- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 2d ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998. *Please try to purchase the **second** edition. It is out of print but it can be purchased online. If you have trouble finding it, please purchase the **third** edition.*

- Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot: Tragicomedy in 2 Acts*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1982. Print.
- The films we will watch will be on reserve at the library or available through Kanopy streaming, but you might want to rent them on your own for your convenience.
- The instructor will provide other required reading materials through Canvas.
- Throughout the semester, I will post complementary resources on Canvas. I encourage you to check this page from time to time for suggestions for your own research and assignments.

Assignments and grading:

Important note: This is an upper division English course, and as such it requires a demanding amount of reading on a daily basis (approximately thirty pages per day on average). The texts will challenge you as a reader and as a critical thinker and the summer semester is particularly fast paced. The readings are necessary for our daily discussions. *If you feel unable to fulfill this requirement, I cordially invite you to register for another class.*

Participation and preparedness: 10%

In order to master the materials, you need to keep up with all the assigned readings and come prepared to actively participate in class activities. Discussions, group work, and classroom activities constitute an essential component of this course. Absences, tardiness, and lack of preparedness will lower your participation grade (see the attendance policy below). Always bring the materials to class. There might be unannounced reading quizzes to ensure you complete and understand the texts.

Group project: Analysis: 30%

In groups, you will consensually choose a narrative text that, according to your criteria, aims to convey the ineffable. It can be a song, a film, a story, a comic... You will define what understanding of the ineffable is present in the text and you will analyze the narrative elements used to express it. You will submit a 1000–1300 words written statement and you will give a presentation about it to the class.

Personal narrative or case study: 5 %

I will provide detailed instructions for this assignment when the time comes. You will have two options. The first option is a personal narrative: you will create a text that uses narrative strategies to tell the ineffable, and you will submit an art statement with it explaining how narratological analysis may be applied to your text. The second option is a case study: you will find a narrative about the ineffable in Gainesville, FL, you will argue why such text engages with the ineffable, and you will analyze it with a narratological approach. By no means are you required to share your personal experiences against your will.

Final exam 45%

This take-home exam will be open for 3 days during the last week of classes. The questions will be essay based.

Moon-watching exercise: 10%

Using the technique described by Eleanor Duckworth, pick one poem, short story, passage, painting, or scene from any of the texts studied in class. You will record your observations of the piece for five days.

After you have recorded your observations, write a short concluding paragraph explaining the significance of the scene and how your observations evolved.

Grade Scale and Rubric:

These are the grades that I assign in this course and how they measure your performance.

A: You fulfilled the guidelines of the assignments properly, and your work shows originality and creativity. Your papers demonstrate that you took extra steps to compose your writing by integrating ideas studied in class. A range papers must be free of typos and grammatical errors. You read the assigned materials, write interesting and well-thought responses, and engage in productive class discussion.

B: You fulfilled the guidelines of the assignments. Your work has a few minor grammar or spelling errors, but is complete and well organized. Your papers incorporate critical concepts studied in class, but it is slightly ineffective due to formal errors or to weak arguments. You read the materials, write correct responses, and participate in class.

C: You fulfilled the guidelines of the assignments but your work needs significant revision. Your papers are logical in content, but your writing is wrong. You sometimes fail to read the materials, write basic responses, and you participate in class with superficial contributions.

D: You neglected basic requirements of the assignments and completed them at a poor quality level. Your papers need significant revision. The content is incomplete and the organization unclear. You do not address concepts studied in class in depth. You barely do the readings, your responses are very poor or inexistent, and you do not participate in class.

E: An E is usually reserved for people who do not do the work or do not come to class. However, students will earn an E if their work clearly shows little effort, if they do not communicate with the instructor about their work or absences, and if they don't read the materials.

A	93-100	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	E	0-59

For information about UF grading policies, visit:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> (Links to an external site.)

Attendance Policy:

This is a participation-driven course. Missing class will affect your grade negatively and it will deprive your classmates of your contribution to discussion.

- **Absence does not justify late submissions.** If you are absent, it is your responsibility to remain informed and come to the next class prepared.
- **Six** missed periods will result on a failing grade.
- After three absences, I reserve the right to lower your final grade by 5 points for each new absence.

- Justified absences only involve university-sponsored events, religious holidays, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena), or severe weather conditions. These absences must be discussed with the instructor or they will not be justified.
- Tardiness is disruptive for the rest of the class. Being **more than 15 minutes late will be considered an absence.**
- **Being tardy** or leaving early **twice** will count as an absence.
- **Communication** with the instructor is crucial to avoid grading and accommodation problems related to absences. These policies are consistent with the UF's attendance policies. For more information on these policies, please visit:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx> (Links to an external site.)

Late Work:

Late submissions **will not be accepted**, unless one of the justified causes for absence is involved. Late work cannot be made up for a lower grade. I might consider deadline extensions for a justified reason, but you would need to request them at least 48hs before the original due date.

Communication with the Instructor:

You can contact me via email or during my office hours. Please allow me 24 hours to respond your emails. If my office hours do not work for you, we can schedule an appointment.

Integrity and Diversity:

Please keep in mind that UF students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. This class is discussion-based, and conflicting opinions may arise. Some of the texts and films we will discuss engage in controversial topics and opinions, sometimes representing controversial or violent situations graphically. Diverse student backgrounds combined with sometimes provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Active learning requires students to honestly share their thoughts, confront different perspectives, and respectfully engage with each other's opinions. **Disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated.**

In addition, a truly responsive learning environment requires the teacher to adapt to the students' needs. Make mindful use of the opportunities provided by your instructor to improve the class and adapt the materials to the group.

Class behavior:

- The use of cell phones, computers, or other electronic gadgets is not allowed, unless these devices are required for specific activities. Please silence your phones. **Texting and using your computer in class will count as an absence.**
- According to UF policy, it is not allowed to eat in class. It is distracting and will make your classmates hungry!

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty:

All students are required to abide by the UF Student Honor Code. Many times, students make mistakes in the way they quote or cite other work. Even those cases constitute a dishonest academic practice. **Never copy-paste without adding quotation marks and mentioning the name of the original**

author. In this course, one case of plagiarism on an assignment can involve failing that assignment. Should plagiarism occur again, the student will be reported to the Dean of Students Office and risks failing the course and other, more severe penalties. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see:
<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Final Grade Appeals: Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Department of English Program Assistant. Appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower grade.

Statement of Composition (C) and Humanities (H) credit: This course can satisfy the General Education Requirement for Composition or Humanities.

Statement of Writing Requirement (WR): This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing.

Statement of Student Disability Services: The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. For more information, see:
<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/> ([Links to an external site.](#))

Statement of 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 information, see:
<http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/policies-2/sexual-harassment/> ([Links to an external site.](#))

Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course. These evaluations are conducted online during the last weeks of the semester. Your instructor will give you time in class to fill the evaluations.

Course schedule:

Please be aware that this calendar is subject to change. Changes and rearrangements will be notified in class. The readings from the textbook are marked as MB *Narratology*, the rest of the readings can be found on Canvas.

Week 1: Introduction, narrative, and the ineffable

M 5/9 Course introduction and presentations

Drop/Add

T 5/10 Basic elements of narrative

Drop/Add

Read: MB *Narratology*, “Introduction” and “Afterword”

Statement of interests and ideas due

W 5/11 Defining the ineffable

HW: Mind map due (submit online before midnight)

Read: Roger Ivar Lohmann’s “Introduction: Naming the ineffable”

TR 5/12 Words in narratology

Read: MB *Narratology*, “Section 1: Words”

F 5/13 Disruptions and doubts

Read: Excerpts from Nyogen Senzaki’s *101 Zen Stories*

Week 2: Literature

M 5/6 Folk and oral traditions

Read: MB *Narratology*, “Section 2: Story: Aspects” (except chapter 8: Visual Stories)

Read: Folk stories compilation (provided by the instructor)

T 5/17 Mysticism and ecstasies

Read: Excerpts of Rumi’s poetry and Teresa of Avila poetry

W 5/18 Metaphors of the divine

Read: MB *Narratology*, “Section 3: Fabula: Elements”

TR 5/19 Existentialism

Read: Excerpts from Simone de Beauvoir’s *When Things of the Spirit Come First*

F 5/20 A sense of wonder

Read: Arthur C. Clarke’s *The Nine Billion Names of God* and *The Star*

Read: Cornel Robu’s “A Key to Science Fiction: The Sublime”

Week 3: Literature II and visual culture

M 5/23 Absence and the absurd

Read: Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*
Personal narrative assignment due

T 5/24 Magic realism

Read: Excerpts from Jorge Luis Borges' *A Personal Antology*

W 5/25 Visual narratives and "the aura"

Read: MB *Narratology*, "Section 2: Chapter 8: Visual Stories"

Read: John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* "Chapter 1"

TR 5/26 The limits of the photographic image

Reading: Roland Barthes' "The Third Meaning: Notes on Some Eisenstein Stills"

F 5/27 The sublime

No reading assigned, work on your group projects

Week 4: Visual culture II and film

M 5/30 No class

T 5/31 Dreams and surrealism

Activity: exquisite corpse

Read: Andre Bretton's *First Surrealist Manifesto*

W 6/1 Emptiness

Introduction to the moon-watching assignment

No reading assigned, work on your group project

TR 6/2 Group presentations

Personal narrative assignment presentations

Group projects due

F 6/3 Narrative in film: script

Watch: *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010)

Week 5: Film II

M 6/6 Narrative in film 2: audiovisual

Watch: *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (Ana Lily Amirpour, 2014)

T 6/7 Transcendental "stasis"

Read: Dan Chyutin's "Absence, Presence, Hiddenness"

Watch: *Au Hasard Balthazar* (Robert Bresson, 1966)

W 6/8 Personhood

Watch: *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982)

TR 6/9 Mental states

Moon-watching exercise due

Watch: *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999)

F 6/10 Death and the after-life

Watch: *Enter the Void* (Gaspar Noe, 2009)

Activity: narrative shot breakdown due

Week 6: Postmodernity and the ineffable

M 5/13 Narratives in the media

No assigned reading, work on your final exam

Activity: narrating the ineffable through social media

Read: Rowan Wilken's "Unthinkable Sublime"

T 6/14 Animation

Watch: *Waking Life* (Richard Linklater, 2001)

W 6/15 Songs

No assigned reading, work on your final exam

TR 6/16 Music videos

No assigned reading, work on your final exam

F 6/17 Course review

Last day of classes

Final exam due