

WR 120 First-Year Writing Seminar (Through a Glass Darkly: Art, Existentialism, and Freedom)

Instructor Name: Jordan Kokot

Office Location: STH 504

Office Hours: T/Th 2-3:30

Contact Information: jdkokot@bu.edu

Course Dates: Sept 4-Dec 21 (Fall 2018)

Course Location: CGS 523

Course Time: T/Th, 12:30-1:45

Credits: 4 credits + 1 BU Hub Unit (Writing)

Course Description

The First-Year Writing Seminar will help you cultivate skills and habits of mind essential to your academic success and to your future personal, professional, and civic life. Writing is a way not only to express what you have to say but also to discover and evaluate it. You will write a great deal at BU and beyond, and each occasion will present you with a range of questions: Who is my audience, and what kind of writing does the occasion call for? How should I structure my writing to engage, inform, persuade, and perhaps even entertain my audience? How can I judge sources wisely and use them effectively and responsibly? How can I clearly express my ideas? In this class we will review general principles about how to address such questions, and we will put those principles into practice as we read, talk, and write about our topic: *Through a Glass Darkly: Art, Existentialism, and Freedom*

What is freedom? In what sense are we free to act? In what ways do the experiences involved in creating and encountering works of art enable or subvert human freedom? In this course we will explore these questions and others like them through close engagements with literature, film, and other works of art that are themselves responses to the existential question of freedom. In addition to reading central existential figures such as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Simone de Beauvoir, we will analyze films such as Ingmar Bergman's *Through a Glass Darkly*, Ron Fricke's *Samsara*, and Louis Malle's *My Dinner with Andre*; plays such as Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit*; novels like Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*; and the paintings of Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, and Caravaggio. We will also consider how conversations are able to cross genres, media, and generations and how the practices of writing and producing art are themselves existential projects.

Course Objectives

You will develop your abilities to:

- read a range of genres with understanding, appreciation, and critical judgment;
- express yourself orally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas;
- craft responsible, considered, and well-structured written arguments;
- produce clear, coherent prose in a range of genres and styles, using different media and modes of expression as appropriate;
- plan, draft, and revise efficiently and effectively, and help your peers do the same by responding productively to their work;
- reflect on your own reading, writing, and editing practices.

Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

Although they differ in their subject content, all WR seminars share common goals and lead you through a sequence of assignments that emphasize planning, drafting, and

revising informed by feedback from your classmates and instructor. You will work on the college-level writing process, from understanding and analyzing sources to organizing your ideas, responding effectively and responsibly to the ideas of others, and revising your prose for clarity and impact. This seminar will also give you opportunities to engage in focused scholarly inquiry and conversation, and to participate in workshops and other activities designed to help you make informed rhetorical choices. Reflecting on your approach to the writing process will help you adapt it for future occasions.

Books and Other Course Materials

- Turabian, Kate L., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010. (Required in all Writing Program classes; available for sale at the BU Bookstore.)
- Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling*. Translated by Alastair Hannay. Penguin Classics, 1986. ISBN-13: 978-0140444490
- Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*. Translated by Bernard Williams. Cambridge UP, 2001. ISBN-13: 978-0521636452
- Simone de Beauvoir. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Translated by Bernard Frechtman. Philosophical Library/Open Road, 2015. ISBN-13: 978-1480442801
- Hermann Hesse. *Siddhartha*. Translated by Hilda Rosner. Bantam, 1982. ISBN-13: 978-0553208849

Note: Some of these texts are available online. You are welcome to use an online source rather than buying texts but you **MUST** clear the online text with me first. There are multiple translations of these works and some are better than others.

Note: Other course texts will be available on Blackboard. On Blackboard, texts in **black** are required. Texts in **blue** are recommended.

Courseware

Our class has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials. You can log in to our Blackboard page at: <http://learn.bu.edu/>
All additional coursework will be posted on blackboard.

Assignments and Grading Criteria

You will be given a range of assignments in this course, including a self-assessment, various reading and writing exercises, three major assignments, and a final portfolio. Much of this work will not be graded, but that does not mean it is unimportant. Students who prepare diligently for class, participate actively, and take the homework exercises and drafts seriously learn more and produce better work than those who do not. Assignments will be submitted either via email or blackboard (instructions to be given when they are assigned).

Exercises: These are low-stakes assignments and activities that are designed to help you make progress on assignments that will be graded. You will do some of these exercises in class; others will be given as homework. They will not receive explicit grades, but you will receive credit for completing them on time.

Major Assignments: You will complete three major assignments: two academic essays and a piece in a different genre. You will write at least one draft of each major assignment. These drafts will receive comments from me and your classmates. They will not receive explicit grades, but you will receive credit for completing them on time. Your course grade will be determined primarily by the quality of the final versions of these assignments.

Oral Presentation: As the semester advances, you will be asked to speak about your work with the class. You will receive feedback from your instructor and classmates, which you will apply to your alternative genre assignment.

Metacognition: You will have opportunities throughout the semester to reflect on your reading and writing practices. The self-assessment you write at the beginning of the semester will take stock of your writing skills and establish personal goals you wish to pursue over the course of the semester. You will also reflect on your experiences and assess your progress as you complete each major writing assignment, ultimately leading to a final reflective essay in your portfolio.

Portfolio: At the end of the semester, you will submit a portfolio containing your self-assessment, major assignments (drafts and final versions), other supporting artifacts, and an introductory essay. The portfolio provides you with an opportunity to document and reflect on your development as a reader and writer over the course of the semester. Your portfolio will contain work that has already been graded. This work will not be re-graded in the portfolio. Rather, your grade for the portfolio will be based on those things that make the portfolio itself a coherent work: the introduction and additional framing (annotations, captions, etc.), the selection of and reflection on artifacts, and overall organization.

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Three major assignments:	70%
- Academic essay 1	15%
- Alternative genre assignment	25%
- Academic essay 2	30%
Exercises and Handouts	10%
Attendance and Participation	5%
Presentation	5%
Portfolio	10%

Participation and Attendance

Since this course is a seminar, your regular attendance and active participation are essential both to your own learning and to your classmates' learning. Under ordinary circumstances, missing more than one week of class (that is, missing three days of class) will lower your final grade by 1/3. Missing more than two weeks (five or more class periods) may lead to failing grade the course. If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss several classes (e.g., religious observances, varsity athletics), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester. Missed conference appointments will be counted as absences.

Late and Missed Assignments

Unless you make other arrangements with me in advance, graded assignments will be penalized by one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late. Please note too that we will regularly work with our exercises and drafts in class. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to participate fully in the class.

I am committed to providing you with timely written or verbal feedback on one draft of each major paper and written feedback and a grade on the final version of each major paper. You can generally expect my responses to your drafts within four or five days of your punctual submission of them; graded final versions will be returned to you within a week.

CAS Writing Center

The CAS Center for Writing (100 Bay State Road, 3rd floor, with a satellite location at Mugar Library, 1st floor) offers one-on-one consultations for students to discuss their work for WR courses with well-trained writing consultants. Consultants will work with you at any stage in your writing process, but they will not edit or correct your paper for you. They will work with you to help you do your own best work, so you should expect to be actively involved in your session. The center is a resource for all WR students. Whether you consider yourself to be a strong writer or a weak one, you can benefit from meeting with a writing consultant.

The CAS Center for Writing is open Monday through Friday. Hours for the current semester are posted on the website below. While the center accepts walk-in visits, you are strongly encouraged to reserve an appointment in advance. Because of the high demand for consultations, students are limited to one reservation per week. You may schedule a session online:

<http://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/the-writing-center/>

You may also schedule a session in person at the front desk of CAS Center for Writing or by calling 617-358-1500 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Cancellations must be made at least 9 hours in advance.

Academic Integrity

In this class, we will discuss conventions for using and citing sources in academic papers. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in Boston University's Academic Conduct Code. All WR students are subject to the CAS code, which can be read online:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

Chosen Name and Gender Pronouns

This course aims to be an inclusive learning community that supports students of all gender expressions and identities. While class rosters are provided to instructors with students' legal names, please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name than that listed in the StudentLink. You are also invited to tell me early in the semester which set of pronouns (she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/their/theirs, etc.) you feel best fits your identity. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Office of Disability Services

I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will satisfy both your learning needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, BU provides many support services that are available to all students.

Disability Services is the office responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability that interferes with your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. Disability Services will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, I invite you to speak with me or to Disability Services.

Course Schedule. This schedule is intended as a blueprint and is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and will be posted on Blackboard.

Date	Learning goals	Readings/viewings due	Assignments
<p>Unit 1: Fear and Trembling</p> <p>This unit will focus on the traditional story of the Akedah (the Binding of Isaac) and its impact on existential philosophy (particularly, on the work of Søren Kierkegaard), art (in the work of Caravaggio), and film (in the work of Ingmar Bergman). In virtue of discussing these thinkers and artists, we will introduce the subjects of the self and its relationship to the world, choice (existential and otherwise), absurdity, and freedom. Using these works and supporting articles, we will develop the capacity to argue clearly and to plan, draft, and revise effectively. You will structure and compose your first essay for an academic audience as you begin to develop your own writerly voice.</p> <p>Central Works: <i>The Akedah</i> (or, <i>The Binding of Isaac</i>, Gen. 22: 1-19) <i>Fear and Trembling</i> (Søren Kierkegaard, 1843) <i>The Sacrifice of Isaac</i> (Caravaggio, c. 1598-1603) <i>Through a Glass Darkly</i> (Ingmar Bergman, 1961)</p> <p>Note: The film for this unit, <i>Through a Glass Darkly</i> (Ingmar Bergman, 1961) will be playing in 35mm at 7pm at the Coolidge Corner Theater on Wednesday, September 12th. Coolidge is a fantastic theater, so I strongly recommend you take advantage of the opportunity!</p>			
Tuesday, 9/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define course goals - Introduce topic and approach - Discussion: what is writing and why do we do it? 		

Thursday, 9/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Answer questions regarding syllabus and course - Introduction to the history and interpretation of the Akedah. - What is <i>academic</i> writing? What is academic reading? 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The Akedah</i> (Gen. 12:1-9; 15-17; 18:1-15; 21-23) - Turabian 1.1-1.3 (pgs. 12-22). - This syllabus <p>(Strongly)</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erich Auerbach, <i>Odysseus Scar</i> - Gen 12-25 (all) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise 1: Getting to Know You/Self-Analysis (due) - Come with questions about the syllabus and the course - Essay 1 assignment sheet will be handed out
Tuesday, 9/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is an (academic) argument and how does it work? How do we ask and answer questions? - Introduce <i>Fear and Trembling</i> and the “Existential Tradition” of Western Philosophy - The question of (moral) freedom 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i>, Preface- “Speech in Praise of Abraham” - Turabian 5.1, 6.1-6.6 <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Introduction to Fear and Trembling</i> (found in the Penguin Classics edition) - Fassio, “How to Read Philosophy” - Skim readings for this unit for paper ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise 2: Finding the question - Schedule mini conference to discuss paper
Thursday, 9/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summarization and Critical Reading - Existential themes in modern art (Caravaggio and the <i>Sacrifice of Isaac</i>) - The issue of cross media conversations 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i>, “Preamble From the Heart” - Caravaggio packet <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turabian 5.2-5.7, 9 - Michael Fried, “Thoughts on Caravaggio” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise 3: Critical Summary - Free write on Caravaggio (10 min in class)
Tuesday, 9/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning your paper and crafting your argument - Existential dread 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i>, “Problema I&II & Epilogue <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turabian 3, 8.1-8.5 - Problema III 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise 4: Mini Prospectus - Schedule conference to review paper
Thursday 9/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contributing to a conversation - In class Peer review - Existential themes in film 	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bergman, <i>Through a Glass Darkly</i> (watch film) - Bergman packet <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - J. M Bernstein “Remembering Isaac” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intro and 1 body paragraph due (bring 2 paper copies)

Unit 2: Suffering and Response, Withdrawal and Affirmation

In this unit, we will begin to discuss alternative views of the self/world dynamic, suffering, joy, meaning, and the existential weight of convalescence, first by engaging with one of the greatest works of world religion and philosophy, the *Dhammapada*. Likewise, we will pick up the concepts Amor Fati (love of fate) and the “free spirit” from Nietzsche’s *Gay Science*. We will also discuss more directly the issue of cross-media and cross-cultural conversation and how ideas transcend genres and generational boundaries. In this unit, you will be asked to take many of the lesson’s you learned in the first paper and apply them to a more open world of questions. You will be asked (with the help of the instructor) to select your own topic and construct your own position in defense of a claim or a set of claims.

Central Works:

The Dhammapada (or, *The Sayings of Buddha*)

Siddhartha (Hermann Hesse, 1922)

On the Suffering of the World and *On the Vanity of Existence* (Arthur Schopenhauer, 1850)

Samsara (Ron Fricke, 2012)

The Gay Science (Friedrich Nietzsche, 1882)

Tuesday, 9/25	- Wrap up Unit 1 - Introduce Unit 2	Required: - <i>The Dhammapada</i> Preface and Introduction by <i>Bhikku Bodi</i> ,	- Final Draft of first paper due at midnight (submitted electronically) - Metacognitive work/revised papers due 6 days after paper review conference
Thursday, 9/27	- Background and perspective: Identifying background assumptions and differentiating perspectives	Required: - <i>The Dhammapada</i> , aphorisms 1-208 Recommended: - Dostoyevsky, <i>Notes from the Underground</i> (part 1)	- Essay 2 Assignment Sheet handed out
Tuesday, 10/2	- Introduce Portfolios - Paper review discussion	Required: - <i>The Dhammapada</i> , aphorisms 209-423 Recommended: - Skim readings for this unit for paper ideas	- Mini exercise: Aphorisms and the Dhammapada
Thursday, 10/4	- Challenging authority and expanding conversations: finding problems and growth points in arguments - Finding a thesis.	Required: - Schopenhauer, <i>On the Suffering of the World</i> and <i>On the Vanity of Existence</i> Recommended: - Bowen, “The Transient Experience with Art	
Tuesday, 10/9	No class (Monday Schedule)	(Strongly) Recommended: - Begin reading <i>Siddhartha</i> (Hermann	

		Hesse) -Academic Argumentation Handout (on blackboard)	
Thursday, 10/11	- In class thesis workshop	Required: -Hesse, <i>Siddhartha</i> , 1-61 -Academic Argumentation Handout (on blackboard) Recommended: -Turabian ch. 6-8	-Exercise 5: topic paragraph and rough draft of thesis due
Tuesday, 10/16	-Wrap up thesis workshop -Planning and drafting more complex papers	Required: -Fricke, <i>Samsara</i> (watch film) (Strongly Recommended): -Hesse, 62-75 -Cairns, "The Philosophy and Psychology of the Oriental Mandala"	-Exercise 6: Samsara Reflection -Exercise 7 (Mini-Prospectus) handed out
Thursday 10/18	- Art and Transience (Mandalas and Film) - Introductions	Required: -Hesse, <i>Siddhartha</i> (62-151) -Cairns, "The Philosophy and Psychology of the Oriental Mandala" Recommended: -Fricke, <i>Baraka</i> (film) -Liddell, "Transience of Art in Life"	
Tuesday, 10/23	- Joy and convalescence - Conclusions - Sentence and Argument Flow	Required: -Nietzsche, <i>Gay Science</i> , Preface and Book 1 (§1-17, 19, 21, 23, 25-29, 33, 37, 39, 41, 42) Recommended: -Beatrice Han-Pile, "Nietzsche and Amor Fati" - <i>Gay Science</i> "Joke, Cunning, and Revenge," and Book 1 (all)	-Exercise 7: Mini-Prospectus -Exercise 8: Introductions -Schedule optional conference by this date or earlier
Thursday, 10/25	- Sentence Flow, part II - Amor Fati	Required: -Nietzsche, <i>Gay Science</i> , Books 2 and 3 (§44-47, 52, 55-59, 76-80, 84-89, 93, 107-110, 115, 116, 120-121, 125, 143, 151,	-Rough draft due for paper exchange. Return comments by Monday, Oct 29 at 5:00pm

		162, 241, 261, 266-275) Recommended: - Bernard Reginster, "Perspectivism, Criticism, and Freedom of Spirit" - <i>Gay Science</i> Books 2 and 3 (all)	
Tuesday, 10/30	- Revisions and Redrafts - The Free Spirit	Required: - Turabian ch 15 - Nietzsche, <i>Gay Science</i> , Books 4 and 5 (§276-292, 295-97, 299-308, 316-319, 321-326, 344, 339-342, 343-347, 354, 370, 382, 383) Recommended: - Bernard Reginster, <i>The Affirmation of Life</i> (Ch 1) - Turabian, ch. 14 - <i>Gay Science</i> , Books 3 and 4 (all) and Appendix	- Exercise 9: Peer Exchange (due Monday)

Unit 3: Art, Freedom, and Audience

In this unit, we will begin to explore the relationship between art as an expression of freedom, and art as indexed to an audience. In other words, our topic will be the nature and role of interpersonal communication—the tension and coherence between saying and hearing. Likewise, our project for this unit will engage directly with the issue of writing to a specific audience and with certain genre constraints in mind. With the help of the instructor, students will select a particular genre within which to produce original content for a particular audience. We will also discuss how genres break down and how audiences change over time.

Central Works and Figures:

The Ethics of Ambiguity (Simone De Beauvoir, 1945)
No Exit (Jean-Paul Sartre, 1944)
Origin of the Work of Art (Martin Heidegger, 1935-1960)
Robert Motherwell
Mark Rothko
My Dinner with Andre (Louis Malle, 1981)

Note: Several local art museums have works by the artists we will be discussing currently on display. The MFA, for instance, has several Motherwells and the Harvard Art Museum often has Rothkos on display. I *strongly* recommend you take the time to see these works in person! Seeing a work of art on a screen and seeing it in person are categorically different experiences.

Thursday, 11/1	- Recap Unit 2/Introduce Unit 3 - Introduction to library	Recommended: - Turabian ch. 15	- Second Essay Due. Metacognitive work/revised papers
----------------	--	--	--

	resources - Introduction to audience/genre/media discussion		due 6 days after paper has been returned. - Bring laptops to class
Tuesday, 11/6		Required: - Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism" - Ruth Chang, "How to Make Hard Choices" (TED Talk) Recommended - Skim readings for project ideas - Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism"	- Project 3 assignment handed out
Thursday, 11/8	- Audience and Genre	Required: - Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism" - Ruth Chang, "How to Make Hard Choices" (TED Talk)	
Tuesday, 11/13		Required: - De Beauvoir, <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , Part 1 - Sartre, <i>No Exit</i> (start reading) Recommended: - Ruth Chang, "Hard Choices"	
Thursday 11/15		Required: - Sartre <i>No Exit</i> (finish) - De Beauvoir, <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , Part 2 (selections)	- Exercise 10: Reading Response
Tuesday, 11/20		Required: - Motherwell Packet - Rothko Packet Recommended: -	- Exercise 11: Statement outlining your final project due - Preliminary Work for Assignment 3 due - Try to schedule optional meeting by this date
Thursday, 11/22	No Class, Thanksgiving Recess	Recommended: - Louis Malle, <i>My Dinner with Andre</i> (watch film)	
Tuesday, 11/27	- 7 minute flash presentations (part 1)	Required:	
Thursday, 11/29	- 7 minute flash presentations (part 2)	Required:	
Tuesday, 12/4	- 7 minute flash presentations (part 3) - Portfolio preparation	Required: - Heidegger, <i>Origin of the Work of Art</i> (selections) - Lee Braver,	

		<p>Commentary on <i>Origin of the Work of Art</i> (selections)</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Origin of the Work of Art</i> (full text) - David Campbell, "Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Meaning" - William Bossart, "Heidegger's Theory of Art" 	
Thursday, 12/6	- In class workshop on projects -	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Louis Malle, <i>My Dinner with Andre</i> (watch film) - Grotowski, "Statement of Principles" <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grotowski: "Towards a Poor Theatre" 	- Rough Draft of Project due
Tuesday, 12/11	- Wrapping up and looking ahead	<p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maurice Merleau-Ponty, <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i>, "Freedom" (selections) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In class writing reflection - Final Project Due Wed. at Midnight - Final Portfolio Due Wed. at Midnight