

## **COLI 211B (01) Literature and Psychology**

Fall 2005

T Th 8:30-9:55 AM

Fine Arts 346

Brendan Mahoney

E-mail: [bmahone1@binghamton.edu](mailto:bmahone1@binghamton.edu)

Office: LT 1505

Office Hours: T 12:00-1:00 PM, Th 1:00-2:00 PM and by appointment

### **Course Description**

You walk past an alley. A voice arises from the shadows and requests your help. What is the hidden person's intention? Is it a sincere plea for help or a concealed threat? You are reading a short story. The protagonist lights a solitary lamp in her living room window before retiring each night. What is the meaning of this action? Daily, we navigate a world that calls for continuous interpretation and the investigation of the significance and relevance of actions and events. Similarly, literature presents us with equally complex worlds that demand we employ our best navigational hermeneutics.

Psychology is the empirical and theoretical study of the human psyche (be it individual or social). Two strands of psychology – psychoanalysis (Freudian) and analytical (Jungian) – have an affinity with literature. Both of these theories function by an analyst (a “reader”) interpreting a client's free associations, dreams, speech, etc. (the “text”).

Over the course of the semester, we will use psychoanalysis and analytical psychology as a means to uncover meaning(s) in a variety of texts in Western literature. In order to do this, we will familiarize ourselves with some of the key concepts of Freud (e.g. dream interpretation, structure of the psyche, drives) and Jung (collective and personal unconscious, archetypes, individuation). These will be our guides as we both explore and grapple with the literary text. Finally, throughout the course I would like us to keep a background dialogue with the following critical issues: 1) the relationship between language and the psychological concepts, 2) the authority of the author, reader and analyst to assign meaning, and 3) the sufficiency of psychology to fully extrapolate meaning from texts.

### **Requirements**

This course counts for the university writing requirement; therefore, the class is writing intensive. I will make assessments of each student based 60% on his/her written work and 40% on his/her class participation. There are **two 2 page reflection papers, three shorter (half to one page) writing exercises, one 3-4 page essay for which each student is required to submit a rewrite after receiving the graded original draft, and a final essay 5-7 pages in length due on the scheduled dates (all written work must be in 12 pt. Times New Roman font with standard 1” margins)**. The details of the rewrite, and its relation to the overall grade, will be outlined later in the semester. I will determine the grade for the essays and the writing exercises by their content, clarity, structure, grammar and critical thinking, and I will assess the reflection papers based on their clarity, grammar and evidence of engagement with the texts. I have set aside two class periods during the semester to discuss the writing process and to workshop ideas. On top of the papers, I am requiring that each student prepare a 1 page summary of the assigned reading to be presented to the class once during the course of the semester. I will create the schedule after the first day of class. A copy of the summary is due in to me on the day that it is presented. This assignment will count towards both the writing and participatory components of the class.

Aside from summary presentation, I will evaluate class participation by the following criteria: **1)** Attendance. Each student is permitted **two** unexcused absences. Beyond two, an excuse deemed reasonable by me is required or else the additional absences will negatively affect the participation grade. **2)** Contribution to class discussions. This is a discussion oriented class, and active participation by all class members is essential for the course format and the learning process. Examples of discussion contribution are thoughtful comments, responses, ideas and questions. I will reward the courage and daring behind an apt question – no matter how simple it may seem. **3)** Sending e-mails to me with questions, comments, reflections, etc. **4)** Coming to my office hours to discuss the material, seek clarification, run ideas, raise questions, etc. **5)** Anything that demonstrates intellectual curiosity and active engagement with the assigned works.

### **Goals and Expectations**

My aim in this course is to aid each student's personal development of his or her analytical abilities through an emphasis on critical writing, reading and thinking skills. I do not expect any class member to be an expert in either psychology or literary theory (myself included) at end of the semester, but I hope that each participant leaves more confident in his or her academic prowess. Further, I hope that each of us gains something from the course that enriches our respective lives. Lastly, enjoy the material!

### **Required Texts**

*Beowulf*. trans. Heaney

Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents; On Dreams*. trans. Strachey. *The Ego and the Id*. trans. Riviere.

Hesse, Hermann. *Demian*. trans. Roloff and Lebeck.

Jung, C.G. *The Basic Writings of C.G. Jung*. trans. Hull. ed. de Laszlo.

Mann, Thomas. *Death in Venice and Other Tales*. trans. Neugroschel.

Sophocles. *The Three Theban Plays*. trans. Fagles.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Texts are available at the university bookstore.

### **Course Schedule**

Tues. 8/30: Introduction to the course.

Thurs. 9/1: Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, pg. 159-195

Tues. 9/6: Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, pg. 195-251

Thurs. 9/8: Freud, *On Dreams*, ch. I-V

#### **WRITING EXERCISE I DUE**

Tues. 9/13: Freud, *On Dreams*, ch. VI-XIII

Thurs. 9/15: Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, ch. I-III

#### **WRITING EXERCISE II DUE**

Tues. 9/20: Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, ch. IV-V

Thurs. 9/22: Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, ch. I-III

#### **WRITING EXERCISE III DUE**

Tues. 9/27: Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, ch. IV-VIII

**REFLECTION PAPER 1 DUE**

Thurs. 9/29: Class on writings techniques and tactics. **Essay I topics distributed.**

Thurs. 10/6: Mann, *Death in Venice*, ch. 1-3

Tues. 10/11: Mann, *Death in Venice*, ch. 4-5

Tues. 10/18: Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, pg. 3-48

**ESSAY I DUE**

Thurs. 10/20: Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, pg. 48-102

Tues. 10/25: Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, pg. 102-151. **Essay I returned.**

**REFLECTION PAPER II DUE**

Thurs. 10/27: Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, pg. 151-194

Tues. 11/1: Jung, *Basic Writings*, pg. 56-98

Thurs. 11/3: Jung, *Basic Writings*, pg. 111-122, 140-185

**ESSAY I REWRITE DUE**

Tues. 11/8: Jung, *Basic Writings*, pg. 299-337

Thurs. 11/10: Jung, *Basic Writings*, pg. 339-374

Tues. 11/15: *Beowulf*, trans. Heaney. **Final essay topics distributed; essay rewrites returned.**

Thurs. 11/17: *Beowulf*, trans. Heaney

Tues. 11/22: Hesse, *Demian*, prologue - ch. 3

Tues. 11/29: Hesse, *Demian*, ch. 4-5

Thurs. 12/1: Hesse, *Demian*, ch. 6-8

Tues. 12/6: Essay writing workshop

Thurs. 12/8: Course wrap-up, Fagles "Introduction" to Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*

**FINAL ESSAY DUE**