



ENGL 1501W-007  
LITERATURE AND PUBLIC LIFE  
Spring 2017  
Mechanical Engineering 221  
T/TH 2:30-4:25  
Instructor: Dr. John Pistelli  
Email: [piste004@umn.edu](mailto:piste004@umn.edu)  
Course Website: [moodle.umn.edu](http://moodle.umn.edu)  
Office Hours: W 2:30-4:30 Lind Hall 254

## Description

*Monarch, Citizen, Rebel: Fictions of Power and Justice from Classical Drama to Contemporary Cinema*

According to the course catalogue, ENGL 1501W focuses on “[h]istorical themes, contemporary issues in American public life: access of citizenship, tensions between social duties and individual freedoms, role of moral values in public life.” Our section will attempt to answer this broad mandate by dwelling particularly on questions of power and justice in society (both our own and that of other times and places). Of public life we will ask the following questions: Who holds power? How is power wielded? What constitutes just and unjust uses of power? Is resistance possible or even desirable? How do issues of morality and ethics influence power relations? What about questions of religion, class, or socio-cultural identity (gender, race, sexuality, nationality)? To explore these questions through literature, we will study a selection of fictional works spanning 2,500 years that portray the complications of power and justice as they affect individuals and communities. More specifically, we will isolate three major fictional modes and their characteristic or archetypal protagonists. First, we will study tragic drama to see how the cataclysms to which it subjects its *monarchs* call power into question; second, we will read modern novels in the *bildungsroman* (coming-of-age) genre with an eye to their implicitly democratic celebration not of monarchs but of everyday *citizens* and their quests for justice; finally, we will turn to contemporary popular culture, especially such speculative genres as super-hero and dystopia, to encounter *rebels* who exceed the limits of normative citizenship to attain justice (or power). At all times, we will be attentive to the connections between these fictions and the question of who holds power and how it may be exercised justly in the contemporary world. This writing-intensive course requires you to respond to such issues in formal and informal written work; and to encourage your own participation in public life, a service-learning option will give you the chance to collaborate with others on projects that serve the common good.

## Required Books<sup>1</sup>

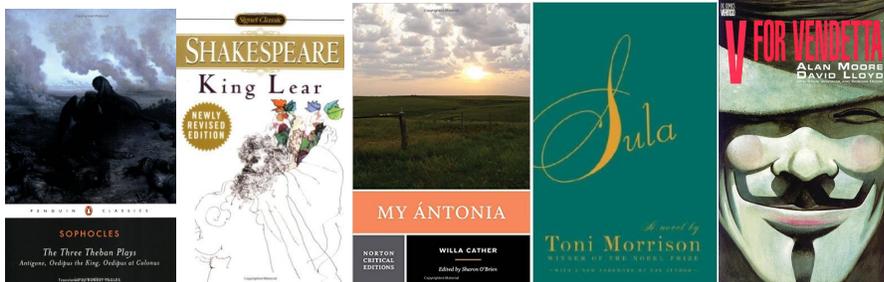
Sophocles, trans. Robert Fagles, *The Three Theban Plays* (Penguin)

William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (Signet)

Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* (Norton)

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (Vintage)

Alan Moore and David Lloyd, *V for Vendetta* (DC/Vertigo)



<sup>1</sup> The books are available in the University Bookstore; please purchase the specified editions. You may choose e-books in lieu of print books, but please be sure the editions and translations are those designated above. All required films will be screened in class. Other readings will be made available on the course website; I expect you to read these as carefully as you would study print documents and to bring them to class—in print or onscreen—on the appropriate day.

**ENGL 1501W satisfies the Literature Core requirement.**

First, the course focuses on the analysis of written works of literature with an emphasis on the overarching theme of citizenship. Second, through a study of the formal dimensions of literature, such as the function of dialogue in Plato's *The Republic* or the symbolic role of animals in Phillip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, students learn the fundamental connections between language, literary technique, and the meaning of texts. Third, the course examines the social and historical contexts of literary works beginning with Plato and then focusing on contemporary masterpieces.

**ENGL 1501W satisfies the General Core guidelines.**

Students in ENGL 1501W engage in close analysis of texts on civic life and ethics to form a basis of knowledge about citizenship and ethics, which helps them form identities as national and global citizens. Students receive an interactive lecture twice each week, and they also explore the ongoing questions and concerns the lecture raises in discussion sections that meet separately each week.

**ENGL 1501W satisfies the Civic Life and Ethics theme.**

Using primarily fictional texts as mirrors of different societies, ENGL 1501W requires students to explore how characters in these societies have developed with or against each other, sometimes in verbal conflict or debate, thereby embodying opposing ethical principles. The course encourages students to develop, deepen, and challenge their personal values through not only intellectual and literary contact with the texts, but also innovative assignments which catapult their personal beliefs into the public sphere. Every writing assignment provides students with opportunities to identify and apply their knowledge of ethical problems they discover in texts, which the instructor helps them connect with problems happening now in American society.

**ENGL 1501W and Student Learning Outcomes**

ENGL 1501W teaches students to identify and define good citizenship in the world and to pose solutions for our country and world. The readings expose students to and require them to understand diverse philosophies and cultures, including Greek philosophy of which they may be completely unfamiliar. Being a course in literature dealing sometimes with speculative worlds, ENGL 1501W develops creativity in students in the belief that creativity is necessary to world-changing leaders capable of great and imaginative solutions. Dedicated to the notion of citizenship, ENGL 1501W naturally helps students acquire skills for effective citizenship and encourages them to speculating about ways they can make a difference in the world.

**ENGL 1501W is a Writing Intensive course.**

This course meets the Council on Liberal Education guidelines for a Writing Intensive course. This means that the course:

- integrates writing into course content, through writing assignments that work toward specific course objectives and writing activities that take place throughout the semester
- provides explicit instruction in writing
- requires a cumulative minimum of 2,500 words of formal writing apart from any informal writing activities and assignments
- includes at least one formal assignment that requires students to revise and resubmit drafts after receiving feedback from the course instructor
- requires that at least one-third of each student's final course grade must be tied to written work and that a student cannot pass the course and fail the writing component

## Assignments

### *Grade breakdown.*

Participation	10%
Quizzes	15%
Journals	25%
Essays	40%
Colloquium	10%

*Participation.* I do not directly give an attendance grade but I do take roll. Be advised that there will be in-class exercises, assignments, and activities in this course that you will miss if you are absent. If you cannot be in class for any reason, please ask a classmate rather than the instructor for notes or a summary. If illness or other problems require you to miss more than a normal amount of class (1 or 2 meetings), please let me know. If you miss more than 2 meetings without a documented reason, your course grade may be affected. If you miss more than 4 meetings, you may be danger of failing the course. Participation includes speaking up in class at least once a week, contributing to in-class activities, and/or attending my office hours or otherwise getting in touch with me.

*Quizzes.* There will be brief quizzes, mostly short and information-based, given at the beginning of class from time to time throughout the semester. They will ask you to identify or produce vocabulary, facts, or passages and possibly to write short explanations of their significance. I will not try to trick you, since the main point is recall. As long as you attend class regularly, pay attention, and take careful notes, you should do fine on these. I have not listed them on the syllabus, but they won't be pop quizzes—I will give you fair warning. They cannot be made up.

*Journals.* All students will submit three two-page journal entries over the semester. These are informal, low-stakes writing meant to get you to reflect on public life. Students who choose the service-learning track will focus their journal entries on their experiences, probably following a narrative template (first impressions, doing the work, reflections), and these journals will be a resource in writing the final essay, which will also include an assessment of your service-learning experience. Students who do not choose the service-learning track should focus their entries on connecting the texts we are reading in class with current events or social issues (you might address a news story, a public figure, a political event, a social problem, etc., and reflect on how it is illuminated by one of the course text). These will be graded  $\checkmark+$ ,  $\checkmark$ , or  $\checkmark-$ , with a letter grade assigned to the cumulative effort (three +s = A, two +s and a  $\checkmark$  = A-, etc.).

*Essays.* You will write two formal essays in this course. I will provide prompts and detailed assignments for these as the course progresses, but in general, they will be designed to give you practice in the basics of literary analysis (close reading, thesis development, research, etc.) in connection with contemporary social and political issues. If you choose the service-learning option for this course (see below), your final essay will include a reflection on that experience while also engaging the texts of the course. For the first essay, you will participate in a peer-review workshop before handing in a final draft to me. Each paper will be worth 20% of your grade. See the course schedule for due dates. Essays should be submitted electronically in .doc or .docx formats and the name of your file should follow this format: yourlastname-essay#.doc (example: pistelli-essay3.doc). More details will be provided later in the course. Late assignments will not be accepted without a documented reason.

*Colloquium.* For your final essay, you will prepare a 10-minute presentation to the class detailing your argument, method, etc. in a conference format; you will also be required to take questions from your classmates. This assignment will be graded both on your project's quality and on your public presentation of the material. More detail will be provided later in the course.

## Grades

### *Grading Policy.*

- A (90-100): Outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
- B (80-90): Significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements
- C (70-80): Meets the course requirements in every respect
- D (60-70): Worthy of credit, even though it fails to meet course requirements fully
- F (0-60): Work was not completed

*Incompletes.* A grade of incomplete (“I”) is given only in a genuine and documented emergency, and *only* for work which is due during the last weeks of the course. You must make arrangements for an incomplete before the last day of class.

### **Disability Accommodations**

Any student with a documented disability condition who needs to arrange accommodations should contact the instructor and Disability Services (612-626-1333) at the beginning of the semester.

### **Scholastic Dishonesty**

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. If it is determined that a student has cheated, he or she may be given an “F” or an “N” for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University.

### **Student Writing Support**

Students can get one-to-one-consultations on any course paper or writing project at Student Writing Support. Student Writing Support has several campus locations, including the main location in 15 Nicholson Hall. See <http://writing.umn.edu/> for details about locations, appointments, and online consultations.

### **Student Conduct**

To avoid disruptions, please observe the following policies. Turn phones off and put them away before coming to class. During class, your attention should be directed toward whomever is speaking or to your assigned task. I strongly discourage use of laptops and other devices during class time (unless appropriate) as they tend to isolate the user and distract others; if you have a pressing need to use one, please come and talk to me about it.

### **Offensive Material**

In this course, students may be required to read words or view images that they may consider offensive. The ideas expressed in any given text do not necessarily reflect the views of the instructor, the English Department, or the University of Minnesota. Course materials have been selected for their literary, cultural, and/or historical value, in order to achieve specific learning objectives and course goals. These materials are meant to be examined in the context of intellectual inquiry and critical analysis, as appropriate for a university-level course. If you are easily shocked and/or offended, please contact the instructor to discuss whether this course is suitable for you.

### **Other Policies**

For extensive information about UMN policy regarding the above topics and others—Student Conduct Code; Use of Personal Electronic Devices in the Class Room; Scholastic Dishonesty; Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences; Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials; Grading and Transcripts; Sexual Harassment; Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action; Disability Accommodations; Mental Health and Stress Management; and Academic Freedom—I strongly encourage you to visit:

[http://www.policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/SYLLABUSREQUIREMENTS\\_APPA.html](http://www.policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/SYLLABUSREQUIREMENTS_APPA.html)

**What is service-learning?**

Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Students use what they learn in the classroom to address community-identified issues. They not only learn about practical applications of their studies, they also become actively contributing citizens and community members through the service they perform.

**What does service-learning look like at the University of Minnesota?**

- Students either work individually or in small groups with a community-based organization to address a community need;
- Students work with one organization over the course of the semester, either in a direct service role or on a specific project tied to the content of their academic course;
- The experience is relationship-based;
- Students' work with the organization will be ongoing throughout the semester, averaging 2-3 hours per week for approximately 30 hours (a minimum of 20 hours total is required).

**Why participate in service-learning?**

Many people learn as well or better by doing as by reading or listening. Education is a function not only of lectures and books, but also of experience, and especially of connecting what one reads and hears with ongoing experiences and observation. Service-learning provides a hands-on approach to learning while also contributing the public good.

**Why am I getting credit for volunteering?**

Attendance and participation in class sessions may form part of your final grade for a class, but typically most of your grade comes from other assignments that allow you to demonstrate what you have learned from lectures, readings, discussions, etc. Service-learning works the same way – your instructor may determine part of your course grade by the time you spend working with an organization, but more significantly, you are receiving credit for the learning connected to your experience in the community. This makes service-learning different from volunteering, where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary intended beneficiary is clearly the service recipient. The learning in service-learning is equally important, and it primarily benefits you, the learner. Think of your service-learning experience as a text you are learning from, but instead of reading it, you are living it. Unless you are able to articulate and connect what you learn from your course texts, from lectures, and from your experience in the community to the course concepts to your instructor in an acceptable way, you will not get credit for your work.

**What doesn't count for service-learning?**

Here are some examples of when volunteer or community work may not be used to fulfill a service-learning requirement for a course. If you have any questions about what does or doesn't count, contact your faculty member and your service-learning coordinator.

- **On-Campus Service:** An important component of service-learning is the opportunity to engage with communities outside of campus and learn from new and different environments, so work done with and for a student organization or campus office or program, even if it is unpaid, will not fulfill service-learning requirements. There are some on-campus experiences that can count as service-learning if the work includes partnering with off-campus communities or individuals.
- **Work Study or Paid Work:** The spirit of service-learning is that it is unpaid work that benefits the community and enhances student learning. This is also a matter of fairness: while many students work, most students are not able to apply their paid work experiences to fulfilling service-learning requirements.
- **Working with immediate family:** Service-learning activities must adhere to all University policies. This includes the policy on Managing Nepotism and Personal Relationships, which prohibits individuals from teaching or supervising the employment of any member of their family or their partner. Since you are doing service-learning as part of an academic course, it would likewise be inappropriate for a member of your family or a significant other to serve as your service-learning supervisor.

**Does the time I spend traveling to and from my service-learning site count toward my required hours?**

No, just as time spent traveling to and from class does not count as instructional time, and time spent traveling to and from a job is not compensated. When you schedule service-learning into your weekly activities, you need to allow enough time to get to and from your organization, but you should only record the hours you spend working at the organization.

**Can I be reimbursed for the costs of traveling to my service-learning site, like my bus fare?**

No. Service-learning provides additional content for your class, just like any books you are required to purchase. Think of your transportation costs for service-learning as if you were assigned to purchase another book for the class instead.

**What if I'm doing service-learning in multiple courses this semester?**

Most students in this situation want to know, "can I use the same placement for both courses?"

The answer is often yes, as long as the work you'll be doing at your service-learning site has a clear connection to the course content for both classes. If you are in this situation, **contact your service-learning coordinator as soon as possible** and copy your instructors on the message to begin the process of making sure your organization is approved for both classes and discussing how many total hours of service-learning will be expected of you during the semester (students in this situation are asked to do more than the minimum number of hours required for one class). **You should only record the hours you spend at the organization once in the online system**, and your service-learning coordinator will also make sure that both of your instructors know how many hours you have completed by the end of the semester. If one of these courses is an internship, field experience or required for a professional license, it is unlikely you will be able to reduce your total hours and/or combine placements.

**Should I record the hours I spent at my pre-service training workshop?**

You should record any time spent attending orientation and/or training sessions at your organization, but **do not record the hours you spend attending a pre-service training workshop offered on campus by the Center for Community-Engaged Learning** (Community Involvement in Practice, Critical Perspectives on Community Involvement, or the MLC Tutor Training), **even if your instructor is allowing you to count your workshop attendance toward your total hours for the semester**. All hours you record in the online system are submitted to your organization for your supervisor's approval, and s/he has no way of knowing whether or not you attended a training on campus. Your attendance at the pre-service training will be tracked in another part of the online system so your instructor can give you the appropriate credit.

**Academic integrity also applies to community work done for academic credit.** Any of the following actions constitute academic dishonesty within a community-based learning context and will be addressed in the same way as any other act of academic dishonesty:

1. Misrepresenting hours completed at a community site or spent working on a community project (students can count time spent off-site doing work that is required to complete a project for a community organization).
2. Writing reflections or completing other assignments about events or activities the student was supposed to attend and participate in, but did not actually attend or participate in.
3. Signing in at a site or training session and leaving before the hours or training was completed OR signing in for a friend or classmate at a site.
4. Writing reflections based on previous community work or documenting hours done at a community organization during a previous semester and misrepresenting it as your current service-learning experience.

**Accommodations for Students Registered with Disability Resource Center Doing Service-Learning**

If you are registered with Disability Resource Center you are eligible to receive accommodations from the University when doing service-learning in the community. While not all buildings where community groups are located are 100% accessible to students with physical disabilities, service-learning staff can work with you to find a service-learning site that meets your needs. If you have a non-apparent disability, we encourage you to talk with your service-learning liaison and/or your Access Consultant to discuss the type of work environment and structure you need to be successful during your community experience.

**Confidentiality and Privacy Issues within the Service-Learning Context**

Community organizations participating in service-learning expect students to work to the best of their abilities and act in a responsible manner. Furthermore, many service-learning students will be working with individuals who fall into protected categories, such as children, seniors, or individuals with disabilities. Be aware that through your service-learning, you may come to know information about individuals that is covered by rules and ethical guidelines about confidentiality. You should speak to your community supervisor about how confidentiality obligations apply to you. Examples of how these issues might arise in your service-learning include:

1. You should not take photographs of anyone at your service-learning site without following the policy the organization has in place. This often involves getting written permission from the individual and/or written permission or the parent/guardian of children under 18 years of age.
2. During class discussions, be careful about revealing any information that could be used to personally identify any individual you work with in your service-learning.
3. In written assignments and especially when using online learning tools (Moodle, class blogs, etc.), be particularly attentive about the information you disclose about your service-learning experience, in case the site you are using is publicly available online. Refrain from mentioning the name of your organization and change the names of any individuals you write about if you are utilizing these online tools for your class.

**Please note that Criminal Background Checks are also required for many service-learning placements, especially those that involve working with “vulnerable populations” such as children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. If the agency asks about any convictions and you have a criminal record:**

- Be honest. Failure to state convictions that are then uncovered in a background check will likely result in your immediate dismissal from your service organization.
- Ask the agency representative to explain what types of convictions are not acceptable (these often involve convictions such as those involving theft, violence, drug sales, and/or crimes against minors).
- If you believe that your record could disqualify you from the approved service-learning options, **please be proactive and talk to your service-learning liaison** to discuss alternative placement options.

### Non-Discrimination and Religious Service

According to the University of Minnesota Board of Regents policy on *Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action*, the University shall,

Provide equal access to and opportunity in its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

This policy applies to service-learning provided as part of any academic course, so the Center for Community-Engaged Learning (CCEL) shall only develop partnerships with organizations that comply with this policy and offer volunteer opportunities to any and all interested students. **If your faculty member allows you to do your service-learning at an organization that is not a CCEL partner, CCEL staff must contact the organization to ensure their compliance with this non-discrimination policy before your work with them will be approved for class credit.** Organizations that exclude any potential volunteers on the basis of any of the criteria listed in the non-discrimination policy will not be a permissible service-learning site. In order for you to receive academic credit, the site must qualify as a “University of Minnesota program” that is equally available to all members of our community.

You may perform service-learning with faith-based organizations, including religious institutions such as churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, etc., if the organization complies with the non-discrimination policy. However, service done as part of an academic course **cannot include any of the following religious activities: providing religious education/instruction, conducting worship services, or engaging in any form of religious proselytizing.** CCEL staff ensures that our community partner organizations comply with these guidelines as well. Again, if your faculty member allows you to do your service-learning at an organization that is not a CCEL partner and you would like to work with a faith-based organization or a religious institution, **please consult with your service-learning coordinator before beginning your service to make sure your proposed experience adheres to these guidelines.**

**SCHEDULE OF READING AND ASSIGNMENTS**  
 (\*) = text is located on the course website ([moodle.umn.edu](http://moodle.umn.edu))

**Prologue. Literature, Public Life**

- 01/17
- Auden, “September 1, 1939” (\*)

- 01/19
- Service-learning presentations

**I. The Deaths of Kings: Monarchs and Tragic Drama**

- 01/24
- Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*

- 01/31
- Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*

- 02/02
- Sophocles, *Antigone*

- 02/07
- Sophocles, *Antigone*
  - “Hegel’s Interpretation of Antigone” (\*)

- 02/09
- William Shakespeare, *King Lear* act 1

- 02/14
- William Shakespeare, *King Lear* acts 2-3

- 02/16
- William Shakespeare, *King Lear* acts 4-5

- 02/21
- George Orwell, “Lear, Tolstoy, and the Fool” (\*)
  - Journal #1 due to Moodle by 11:59PM 02/22

**2. History from Below: Citizens and the *Bildungsroman***

- 02/23
- Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* pp. 7-48

- 02/28
- Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* pp. 48-102

- 03/02
- Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* pp. 102-143

- 03/07
- Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* pp. 145-179
  - Essay #1 due in class for peer-review workshop; bring two copies

03/09

- Americanization and Immigration, pp. 253-284, 291-316
- Essay #1 final draft due to Moodle by 11:59PM on 03/10

03/14, 03/16

- Spring break

03/21

- James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel" (\*)

03/23

- Toni Morrison, *Sula* Part One
- Journal #2 due to Moodle by 11:59 PM on 03/24

03/28

- Toni Morrison, *Sula* Part Two

03/30

- Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, "The Radical Vision of Toni Morrison" (\*)

### 3. Thought Experiments: Rebels in Speculative Popular Culture

04/04

- Alan Moore and David Lloyd, *V for Vendetta* book 1

04/06

- Alan Moore and David Lloyd, *V for Vendetta* book 2

04/11

- Alan Moore and David Lloyd, *V for Vendetta* book 3

04/13

- Isaac Butler, "V for Vile" (\*)

04/18

- Christopher Nolan, *The Dark Knight* (in-class screening)

04/20

- Christopher Nolan, *The Dark Knight*
- Journal #3 due to Moodle by 11:59PM on 04/21

04/25

- Andrew Klavan, "What Bush and Batman Have in Common" (\*)
- Kim Nicolini, "Batman and the Old Order" (\*)
- Benjamin Kerstein, "Batman's War on Terror"(\*)

### Epilogue. Colloquium and Conclusion

04/27-05/02

- Final paper presentations

05/09

- Final paper due to Moodle by 11:59 PM