

FTS100: Stories from the Source

Fall, 2012

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The Course:

What should we make of the observation that stories change when they get retold? Should we think of them as decaying with each retelling, as errors accumulate from version to version? Or do they improve, as the tellers understand them better and practice their skills as narrators? Or is the variation simply random and therefore not worth interpreting?

In this course we will look at the way artists, poets, novelists, philosophers, and others have retold or re-presented stories that they find in the Bible. None of them wishes to replace the "original" but each of them does wish to make it new, to apply it to new questions and new contexts, or to send people back to look at what is, and isn't, actually in the original. Along the way we will do lots of comparing of versions of stories--noticing what's present, what's absent, what's changed, and what's the same. This will require some sustained attention to detail on your part. You will also be challenged to assign some meaning to the details and changes that you notice, and to defend that interpretation. This activity of noticing changes and then interpreting them is the heart of this course.

As a First Term Seminar, this course is designed to give you practice and feedback on academic skills you will need to succeed over the next four years. You will be working on understanding and practicing the principles of **writing** papers for college. You will practice **critical thinking**. You will engage in **oral discussion and presentations**. And you will consider how to think about, write about, and discuss, questions of **values**. The course will also be a forum for **advising** during your first semester. I will be your academic advisor, and at times in class we will be discussing topics that are relevant to your academic opportunities and responsibilities. This course is meant to help you successfully manage the transition--academic and social--from high school to college.

Texts:

Ron Hansen, *Atticus*.

Archibald MacLeish, *J.B.*

Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*.

Phaidon Press, *Annunciation*.

Everyday Writer.

handouts of essays, articles, etc., to be distributed as needed.

Some version of the Bible.

Assignments:

Reading

When a reading is assigned for the day, I expect that you to study the reading before coming to class. You should have taken notes from the reading, practiced summarizing it, identified pleasing, difficult, surprising or important passages and concepts, and formulated some ideas you wish to contribute to the class's discussion.

Writing

Both informal and formal writing assignments should reflect your best work. They should be printed out (double-sided printing is fine) with appropriate margins and type (see *Everyday Writer*) and proof-read. Formal writing assignments will be completed in a draft/revision sequence. The "draft" is a complete, proof-read version of the assignment and will receive its own grade. For each draft, you and I will have a 30 minute conference to discuss how it might be revised for improvement. After you revise, you will turn in a packet containing a) your first version, b) a brief statement of your goals for revision, based on our conference, c) the final version. Incomplete packets will be counted as late and will not be graded until they are complete. You should save ALL the written work for the course so that you can assemble it as part of an end-of-semester portfolio.

I will accept late work on a case-by-case basis. Depending on context, I may choose not to accept late work, to accept it with a penalty, or to accept it without penalty. It's your responsibility to initiate a request to turn in work late, and to be aware of the terms on which it is accepted. I make every effort to return written work promptly: it may take me a while to return late work, depending on my other responsibilities.

Grades

The final grade for the course will reflect my overall evaluation of your achievement for the semester. It will be based more or less on the following percentages:

- Formal writing assignments: 50%
- Formal presentations: 15%
- Quality of participation in discussion: 25%
- Informal writing assignments 10%

Communication:

Most of our communication will be done face-to-face during class time and formal and informal office hours. When my office door is open, you should feel free to stop in for questions or conversation. Sometimes I will email you information about class. I will send this information to your Gustavus email account and will expect that you check that account at least daily. I read my Gustavus email regularly, and will respond within 24 hours. In general, I will respond to email sent after 5pm or on weekends when I get in to the office the next day or Monday. I check my college voicemail when I am in the office, and you can leave me a message there.

Office Hours:

I will always be available in my office on MTRF from 9 to 10am, and TR 2:30 to 3:30. If those times don't work for you, we can easily set up another time that will. You will often find me available in my office at other times as well. Call ahead if you are wondering.

Contact information:

Office: Vickner 311
Email: eliason@gac.edu
Phone: x7396.

Course Policies

Attendance

I expect you to come to every class session, prepared, and on time. If you have a legitimate reason to miss class, please inform me ahead of time. If you are ill, please let me know via email. Your presence

and committed participation in the course affects other students and your absence not only disrupts your own learning, it diminishes the experience of your classmates as well. A pattern of absences that shows a lack of seriousness about the course will result in a lower grade for the course.

Classroom

Learning is an intentional activity and is your primary "job" in college. You communicate a lot--both to yourself and to others--about your seriousness with respect to the task by the way you treat class time: your dress, your behavior, your attention.

- *Electronic devices.* I expect that you will give the class your complete attention during class. Please stow and silence your phones, netpads, computers, etc.
- *Food.* While I encourage an informal and relaxed atmosphere in class, a classroom is not a cafeteria. I'm not going to object to a cup of coffee, but I probably will hassle you about bringing a complete breakfast or lunch. Let me know if you have a special circumstance that needs an exception.
- *Dress.* Please take off your coats, jackets, and hats--we can turn up the heat if you are cold.

College Policies:

Academic Honesty:

Dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. If you represent other people's work as your own, make use of prohibited help, plagiarize, interfere with other students' ability to complete their work, attempt to obtain a grade you did not earn, or lie about your work, I will impose appropriate penalties within this course. These may be as severe as failing the course. I will also report all incidents to the Provost's Office, which may impose its own penalties if it detects a pattern of dishonesty. You can find details about the College's academic honesty policy in the Academic Bulletin (catalog). You are invited to include the following pledge on all written work submitted in this course--even if the pledge is not written I will assume it is intended: "On my honor, I pledge that I have not given, received, or tolerated others' use of unauthorized aid in completing this work."

Even the most diligent students can find themselves in a hard place with respect to an assignment or exam. If this is the case for you, it is ALWAYS in your best interest to speak frankly and honestly with your instructor about the situation. The impulse to "solve" the problem by turning in work that is not your own can get you into serious trouble.

Disabilities:

Gustavus Adolphus College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or you think you may have a disability of any nature) and, as a result, need reasonable academic accommodation to participate in class, take tests or benefit from the College's services, then you should speak with the Disability Services Coordinator, for a confidential discussion of your needs and appropriate plans. Course requirements cannot be waived, but reasonable accommodations may be provided based on disability documentation and course outcomes.

Accommodations cannot be made retroactively; therefore, to maximize your academic success at Gustavus, please contact Disability Services as early as possible. Disability Services (<https://gustavus.edu/advising/disability/>) is located in the Advising and Counseling Center.

ELL support:

Support for English Language Learners (ELL) and Multilingual students is available via the College's ELL Support staff person, Andrew Grace (agrace@gustavus.edu or x7395). He can meet individually with

students to consult about writing and other academic tasks and to help students seek other means of support. The ELL Support person can also consult with faculty members who have ELL and multilingual students enrolled in their classes. The College's ELL staff person can provide students with a letter to a professor that explains and supports academic accommodations (i.e. additional time on tests, additional revisions for papers). Professors make decisions based on those recommendations at their own discretion. In addition, ELL and multilingual students can seek help from peer tutors in the Writing Center.

Tentative Schedule

M Sep 3: Introductions: us, the course, Moodle, WebAdviser.

T Sep 4: Annunciation Story: Pictures and Poems. Informal writing assignment given.

R Sep 6: Annunciation Story: Pictures and Poems. Informal writing assignment due.

F Sep 7: Luke 15: The Prodigal, or The Lost Son, or

M Sep 10: *Atticus* pp. 1-100

T Sep 11: *Atticus* pp. 101-163

R Sep 13: *Atticus* pp. 167-247.

F Sep 14 -- No Class: I'll be at the English Department Retreat.

M Sep 17: *Atticus* review of whole.

T Sep 18: Capon essay. Formal Writing Assignment distributed.

R Sep 20: Writing instruction.

F Sep 21: Critical Thinking Day.

M Sep 24: Pictures of the Prodigal.

T Sep 25: Pictures of the Prodigal--on second sight. Formal writing assignment due

R Sep 27: The Story of Job

F Sep 28: *J.B.*

M Oct 1: *J.B.*

T Oct 2--Nobel Conference. No Class.

R Oct 4: *J.B.*

F Oct 5: *J.B.*

M Oct 8: *J.B.*

T Oct 9: *J.B.*

R Oct 11: *J.B.* summary

F Oct 12: Job's wife.

M Oct 15: Art about Job. Formal Writing Assignment given

T Oct 16: Writing instruction for assignment. Library Assignment given.

R Oct 18: Library Session

F Oct 19--No Class. I will be attending a professional conference.

M Oct 22--Reading Days

T Oct 23--Reading Days

R Oct 25: Evaluating sources: Writing Assignment Due.

F Oct 26: Critical Thinking. Bibliography Due.

M Oct 29: Instruction on Oral Presentations

T Oct 30: Instruction on Oral Presentations

R Nov 1: Presentations.

F Nov 2: Presentations.

M Nov 5: Story of the Binding of Isaac.

T Nov 6: *Fear and Trembling*

R Nov 8: *Fear and Trembling*

F Nov 9: *Fear and Trembling*

M Nov 12: *Fear and Trembling*

T Nov 13: *Fear and Trembling*

R Nov 15: *Fear and Trembling*

F Nov 16: *Fear and Trembling*

M Nov 19: *Fear and Trembling*

T Nov 20: *Fear and Trembling*

R Nov 22--Thanksgiving

F Nov 23--Thanksgiving

M Nov 26: *Fear and Trembling*

T Nov 27: *Fear and Trembling*

R Nov 29: *Fear and Trembling*

F Nov 30: *Fear and Trembling*. Writing Assignment given.

M Dec 3: Midrash

T Dec 4: Midrash

R Dec 6: Critical Thinking.

F Dec 7: Breugel: The Way to Calvary; Writing Assignment Due.

M Dec 10: Film: The Mill and the Cross

T Dec 11: Film: The Mill and the Cross

R Dec 13: Spare

F Dec 14: Evaluations. Informal writing assignment given.

M Dec 17: Final Exam time--10:30-12:30.