

**Prof. Dominik Zechner**

Available via E-Mail/Zoom

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Office Hours: T 2–3pm; W 3:30–4:30pm; or by appointment ([Link](#))

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**Kafka and World Literature: *Echoes of the Kafkaesque* (3 cr)**

**01:470:354:01** (08363) / **01:195:382:01** (08362) / **01:563:355:01** (08364)

Spring 2021

MW4, 1:10pm–2:30pm

Taught through remote synchronous instruction (Canvas/Zoom)

Comparable only to the likes of Shakespeare, Franz Kafka belongs to the most commented-on authors in modern literary history. His prose has provoked sheer avalanches of commentary, interpretation, and hermeneutical conjecture. It is no surprise, therefore, that the influence his work has exerted on subsequent generations of writers can hardly be overstated: there is a certain Kafkaesque tone one can discern in recent literary history, from Beckett's theater of the absurd, via the French existentialists, through the machinations of a local writing maniac like Paul Auster. In this seminar, we shall listen in on these *echoes of the Kafkaesque* which resound through the literary landscapes of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. While familiarizing students with the inexhaustible work of Kafka himself, this course will also serve as an introduction to a variety of literary traditions spanning works authored by Jorge Luis Borges, Clarice Lispector, J.M. Coetzee, Bob Dylan, Don DeLillo, and others. All students with a love of literature are welcome!

*No Prerequisites.*

*Fulfills SAS Core goals AHo, AHp.*

*Taught in English.*



Permanent Core Curriculum requirements: AHo, AHp,

- AHo. *Examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production.*
- AHp. *Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.*

**Grade distribution:**

A	90–100%
B+	85–89%
B	80–84%
C+	75–79%
C	70–74%
D	65–69%
F	64 and below

**Grade Components:**

Attendance	10%
Participation	10%
Start-of-the-term Paper	10%
Midterm Reflection	5%
Midterm Paper	15%
Reader’s Responses	25%
Final Presentation & Paper	25%

**Details:**

- Attendance: Your continued and attentive presence throughout the semester is critical. Students are required to show up consistently and thoroughly prepared. The seminar is *camera-on*, which means that passively “tuning in” as a “black square” will not count as sufficient attendance. If you have technical difficulties or you encounter a situation in which it is impossible or too inconvenient for you to turn on your camera, that is fine but please let me know in advance. If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the [University absence reporting website](#) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Those who miss more than two class sessions without a compelling excuse should expect a one-step reduction in the course grade (i.e. an A becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B). Every additional three absences may entail a further one-step grade-reduction. Three late arrivals count as one absence. It is the responsibility of students who have been absent (for any reason) to find out what they have missed and obtain materials that may have been handed out. Missing class in observance of religious holidays is always permitted.

- Participation: To earn your participation grade for this class, your task is to help shape the conversation through well-thought-out questions and comments. This means that instead of just “tuning in” you take part as an *active and well-prepared* participant. Make sure to take notes and write down your thoughts; your memory is not as reliable as you may think. All students are required thoroughly to have read and worked through the assignments for a given session and should stand ready to share questions and thoughts with the group. The course will refine your ability to step up with proven insight in order to perform elaborate academic interventions.
- Papers: Students are asked to write one Start-of-the-term Paper early on in the semester, and one Midterm Paper around spring break. The Start-of-the-term Paper will be very short (3 pages) and serves the purpose of giving me a sense of your writing skills and styles so I can offer detailed guidance and feedback as you embark on your Midterm Papers. The Midterm Paper will be slightly longer (5 pages), and you will be given the opportunity to develop it in the course of an in-class Midterm Reflection that also has a writing workshop component (see description and schedule below). Both papers are written in response to a pre-issued prompt.
- Midterm Reflection: The session before Spring Break will be dedicated to a plenary discussion of the course and our performance and interactions during the first half of the semester. This reflection serves the purpose to pave the way for a smooth second half of the semester and allows us to address any questions for which we may not find the time during regular sessions. It will also provide a space to workshop your midterm papers and refine your writing if need be.
- Weekly Responses: By Thursday of each week, I will unlock the “Module” for the coming week on Canvas. The Module will include everything needed to prepare for the upcoming two sessions, including dates, assignments, deadlines, course materials, etc. The Module will also include a discussion section which students will use to post responses to the assigned texts. Responses are 200–300 words long (i.e., one double-spaced page max), and contain a review or critique of the materials assigned: You can highlight certain aspects you found particularly interesting, emphasize and analyze quotes that you think are pertinent, or pose further questions and write up additional thoughts that might inform our in-class discussion. Students are encouraged to read each other’s responses before each session in order to compare notes and prepare for discussion. The idea is to create an overarching conversation, hence every time you’ll respond to one of your peers’ responses (in addition to your own weekly reader’s response), you may expect extra credit. Each student is required to post *one* such response per week; responses for the upcoming week should be posted no later than Sunday by midnight. *No late submissions.*
- Final Presentation & Paper: The third and final paper for this class will be 8 pages long and written in response to a self-devised topic. Make sure to run your topics by me before starting to work on this assignment. For the last two weeks of class, students will sign up for presentations that will allow them to present draft versions of their papers to the group. Presentations serve the purpose of gathering feedback and identifying weaknesses before polishing the paper for final submission. Detailed instructions for this assignment to follow. **All papers are double-spaced, written in Times New Roman, 12pt font, set according to the MLA style guide, and should be submitted as PDFs by midnight the day of the deadline.**

## Course Schedule:

Week 1	Jan 20	<i>Introduction</i>
Week 2	Jan 25 Jan 27	Robert Walser, The Job Application Franz Kafka, The Test Werner Hamacher, Uncalled
Week 3	Feb 1 Feb 3 [Feb 5]	Franz Kafka, The Metamorphosis Kafka, Metamorphosis (continued) <i>Start-of-the-term Paper due</i>
Week 4	Feb 8 Feb 10	Kafka, Metamorphosis (continued) Clarice Lispector, The Passion According to G.H.
Week 5	Feb 15 Feb 17	Lispector, The Passion (continued) Lispector, The Passion (continued)
Week 6	Feb 22 Feb 24	Lispector, The Passion (continued) Lispector, The Passion (continued)
Week 7	Mar 1 Mar 3	Franz Kafka, A Country Doctor Bob Dylan, Love Minus Zero
Week 8	Mar 8 Mar 10 [Mar 12]	Jorge Luis Borges, The Secret Miracle <i>Midterm Reflection</i> <i>Midterm Paper due</i>
Week 9		<i>Spring Break</i>
Week 10	Mar 22 Mar 24	Franz Kafka, The Burrow Kafka, The Burrow (continued)
Week 11	Mar 29 Mar 31	J.M. Coetzee, In the Heart of the Country Coetzee, In the Heart (continued)
Week 12	Apr 5 Apr 7	Coetzee, In the Heart (continued) Coetzee, In the Heart (continued)
Week 13	Apr 12 Apr 14	Franz Kafka, Josephine the Singer Franz Kafka, A Starvation Artist
Week 14	Apr 19 Apr 22	Don DeLillo, The Body Artist Don DeLillo, The Body Artist
Week 15	Apr 26 Apr 28	Don DeLillo, The Body Artist <i>Final presentations</i>
Week 16	May 3 [May 8]	<i>Final presentations</i> <i>Final paper due</i>

## Course Materials:

Students are required to purchase the following three novels, available at the RU Bookstore:

- J.M. Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country* (Penguin 1982); ISBN 978-0140062281
- Don DeLillo, *The Body Artist* (Picador, 2001); ISBN 978-0-330-48496-1
- Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.* (New Directions, 2012); ISBN 978-0-8112-1968-6

Please make sure to acquire the exact editions indicated here. All other texts will be made available as PDFs through Canvas.

## Rutgers Policies on Academic Integrity:

Cheating on tests or plagiarizing materials in your papers deprives you of the educational benefits of preparing these materials appropriately. It is personally dishonest to cheat on a test or to hand in a paper based on unacknowledged words or ideas that someone else originated. It is also unfair, since it gives you an undeserved advantage over your fellow students who are graded on the basis of their own work. In this class, we will take cheating very seriously. All suspected cases of cheating and plagiarism will be automatically referred to the Office of Student Conduct, and we will recommend penalties appropriate to the gravity of the infraction. I recommend you consult [the university's policy on Academic Integrity](#) and strongly advise you to familiarize yourself with this document, both for this class and for your other classes and future work.

Since what counts as plagiarism is not always clear, I quote the definition given in Rutgers' policy:

*Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of another person's words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Some common examples of plagiarism are:*

- *Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution.*
- *Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one's own words another person's written words or ideas as if they were one's own.*
- *Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.*
- *Incorporating into one's work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other nontextual material from other sources without proper attribution.*

Students often assume that because information is available on the internet it is public information, does not need to be formally referenced, and can be used without attribution. This is a mistake. **All** information and ideas that you derive from other sources, whether written, spoken, or electronic, must be attributed to their original source. Such sources include not just written or electronic materials, but people with whom you may discuss your ideas, such as your roommate, friends, or family members. Judgments about plagiarism can be subtle; if you have any questions, please feel free to ask for guidance from your instructor. On any paper handed in for this class, you will include a pledge testifying to its integrity and originality.

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership of my lectures and personal materials. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Similarly, these copyright protections extend to original papers and projects you produce for this course. In the event that I seek to share your work further, I will first obtain your consent to do so.

## Special Remote Learning Policies:

This course takes place through synchronous remote instruction. Students need to make sure that they can attend all synchronous meetings; in case attendance cannot be guaranteed, students should immediately contact the professor in order to discuss alternatives.

The two main technological tools on which our class relies are Canvas and Zoom. While Canvas provides you with access to all needed course-related materials and information, Zoom is the platform where the class virtually meets once a week.

Even though you are most likely to “join” from your living space, please be aware that you are still attending a class, which means that you are expected to appear and behave as professionally as you normally would.

In order to make our interaction and communication as organic and seamless as possible, it is required that you have your *cameras on* so your interlocutors can see you. You may want to add an appropriate virtual Zoom background if you wish. Be advised that merely joining the Zoom call does not count as participation: you are asked to *actively* engage. In case you cannot turn on your cameras on a given day (for technical or personal reasons), please let your professor know ahead of time.

Whenever you are not speaking, please mute yourself so as not to disrupt the class or interrupt someone else through feedback, static, or background noise. Use the “raise hand” function on Zoom to make the professor and the group aware that you are ready to ask a question or make a comment.

While attending a synchronous class meeting, your attention needs to be with the class and the course materials. Please understand that browsing the web, doing your email, checking social media, texting, etc. during a Zoom class is just as inappropriate as it would be in person. Please be respectful and mindful of the work the instructor and your fellow students are putting into the synchronous meetings.

In case of technological or connectivity issues, please reach out to the professor to discuss your situation. Please visit the [Rutgers Student Tech Guide](#) for resources available to all students. If you do not have the appropriate technology for financial reasons, please email the [Dean of Students](#) for assistance or consider the [Emergency Assistance Fund](#). If you are facing other financial hardship, please visit the [Office of Financial Aid](#).

## Student Wellness:

- Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professionals within Rutgers Health services to support students’ efforts to succeed at Rutgers. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners. Reach CAPS at: (848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

[Main Website](#) / [Crisis Intervention](#) / [Report a Concern](#)

- Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call (848) 932-1181. VPVA is located at 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [Main Website](#)

- Disability Support Services

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the [appropriate disability services office](#) at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the [ODS website](#). It is recommended that students seeking accommodations begin filing paperwork as soon as possible as the documentation review process may take up to 30 business days. Students are encouraged to speak with teachers about these issues at the beginning of the term. All such conversations will be kept strictly confidential. Disability Support Services can be reached at (848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854.