



Introduction to Liberal Arts

LIBA 202, Fall 2024

Prof. Daniel W. Pratt



Alexandr Rodchenko, Book Advertisement, 1924

Course Objectives

This course provides an introduction to the Liberal Arts program, focusing on language and its uses. The liberal arts provide students with a background in language itself, not in a linguistic sense, but on a more theoretical, practical, and ethical level. The books we read all address forms of language(s), how they are used in the world, and what effects those uses have. Students will also learn how to wield their own language more effectively, in both oral and written forms.

Required Texts:

All texts will be available at The Word Bookstore (469 Milton St, Montreal, QC, H2X 1W3). I have chosen to have the books for purchase at The Word because it supports an independent, local bookstore. If you need it, they will also deliver the books to you. This is the link to the online store:

1. Anzaldúa, Gloria, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Aunt Lute Books, ISBN: 1951874021
2. Čapek, Karel, *Three Novels*, Catbird Press, ISBN: 0945774087 (Available Online)
3. Hoffman, Eva, *Lost in Translation: Life in a New Language*, Penguin Books, ISBN: 0140127739
4. Hrabal, Bohumil, *Too Loud a Solitude*, Harper Via, ISBN: 0156904586

5. Kane, Cheikh Hamidou, *Ambiguous Adventure* (Available online at archive.org or on Kindle via Amazon)
6. Shaw, George Bernard, *Pygmalion*

Structure of the Course and Course Policies

- Class time will be a mixture of lecture, discussion, film/media, and other activities designed to hone our skills in literary analysis. **During class, I do not consent to being recorded.** If recordings will become necessary during this semester, I will ensure that they are posted online for you.
- I am available and always happy to see you in my scheduled office hours, or by appointment if you have a conflict that does not allow you to come at those times. I can be reached by email as well. However, I have a 48-hour email rule, meaning that I may not respond to any given email before 48 hours. If I do not respond before that point, you may email me with the title 48-Hour Rule, and I will respond as quickly as possible.
- No late assignments will be accepted without prior written consent. If you feel you may need an extension, please speak to me well in advance of the deadline. You will have **one (1)** automatic extension of 48 hours to be taken during the semester. Please let me know in advance that you will be taking the extension so I can plan my grading accordingly. This automatic extension is **not** available for the draft essay.
- In this class we will be discussing political, cultural, and national issues. While robust debate is good, you are expected to respect your classmates' rights to their opinions and beliefs. This includes not interrupting people, dominating the floor, raising your voice, insulting, threatening, etc. Because university is a learning environment, everyone has the right to be wrong.
- Under no circumstances should you be texting, playing games, checking social media, checking your email, surfing the web, talking on the phone, or otherwise engaging in activities that are unrelated to what is happening in class. Please turn off your phone when you enter the classroom. You may bring a laptop to class, but please restrict use to class-related activities and sit towards the back of the classroom so as not to distract other students.

Assignments (more details will be provided on myCourses closer to the date each is due)

- **Attendance and Class Participation:** This course is based on the premise that literature cannot be passively absorbed but must be actively engaged with. To that end, attendance and class participation are essential components of the class. You are expected to have completed the assigned reading before coming to class and to arrive each day prepared to discuss it.
 - There may be occasional “spot-check” quizzes based on the assigned reading as an extra motivator for keeping up. These will count toward the attendance and participation portion of your grade.
 - Should you be unable to be in class or to participate due to illness, absence, or any other reason including just being shy, there will be a discussion board for additional participation. Please make use of this as a way to develop your ideas and bounce them off of your peers and your instructor. The goal is to additionally foster discussion on the current topics, so using the board must

be done in a timely manner. Responding (respectfully) to other students will be understood as creating more robust discussion.

Grade	Percentages
A	100%-85%
A-	84%-80%
B+	79%-75%
B	74%-70%
B-	69%-65%
C+	64%/-60%
C	59%-55%
D	54%-50%
F	49%-0%

- **Writing Assignment 1:** The first writing assignment will be a short response to one of the readings. You will be expected to write 2-pages (500-word limit), developing an argumentative claim. This assignment will occur in two parts: a draft graded pass/fail, and a full version, graded normally. More details on what this means will be given in class during our writing workshop and in the prompts for the assignment.
- **Writing Assignment 2:** The final paper will be 5-6 pages double-spaced (2500-word limit). This is your chance to formulate a comparative argument about two or three of the texts we read.
- **Leading Class Discussion:** Each student will have the opportunity to lead class discussion for 1 class. Each student will take one day, and they will provide a short presentation/introduction (circa 5 minutes) followed by discussion questions. Students will be evaluated on their presentation, their analysis of the reading, and on the discussion engendered. The goal of this assignment is for students to improve their oral presentation skills and to get used to engaging with an audience.
- **Journal:** Each student should write roughly 500 words on 4 of the 6 longer texts in the class (extra credit is available for additional entries). These are meant to be reflections on the texts, and they do not have to be strictly academic (in other words, you're allowed and encouraged to include personal experience). The goal of this assignment is for students to actively engage with the material and to think beyond the scope of the classroom. Think carefully about how the topics of the texts affect your understanding and experience of language in the world. Entries will be graded on a 0-2 scale, with 0 being no entry, 1 being a mere synopsis, and 2 being proper engagement with the text.

Final Grade Breakdown

- Attendance & participation: 10%
- Writing assignment 1 (Draft): 10%
- Writing Assignment 1: 15%
- Writing assignment 2: 25%
- Leading Class Discussion: 20%
- Journal: 20%

Copyright:

© Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

I remind everyone of their responsibility in ensuring that videos and associated material are not reproduced or placed in the public domain. This means that each of you can use it for your educational (and research) purposes, but you cannot allow others to use it, by putting it up on the Internet or by giving it or selling it to others who may also copy it and make it available. Please refer to McGill's [Guidelines for Instructors and Students on Remote Teaching and Learning](#) for further information. Thank you very much for your help with this.

Academic Integrity:

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information). (approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

Inclusive Learning Environment:

As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.

Evaluations:

End-of-course evaluations are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available on Mercury, the online course evaluation system. I take the evaluations seriously, and I have used them over my career to improve the courses. I particularly appreciate feedback from students who think the class is so-so, since the more extreme feedback is more common.

Student Rights:

“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.” (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 - see also the section in this document on Assignments and Evaluation.)

« Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue). »

Know Your Rights!

Additional policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the McGill Charter of Students' Rights" (The Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities is available here <https://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/rights>)

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

