

## Advanced Seminar on Kafka (LIT662 LIT 430)

“A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us. I believe that.”—*Franz Kafka*

“From a certain point on, there is no more turning back. That is the point that must be reached.”—*Franz Kafka*

**Instructor:** Professor Douglas Shields Dix (U.S.A.), Ph.D. University of Washington; *Habilitation*, Masaryk University (Brno, ČR); Professorship, Universität Stuttgart. Professor Dix has lived and taught in the Czech Republic (and Germany) since 1989.

**Course Description:** In this advanced seminar we will be studying the works of Franz Kafka and the critical reception of those works. We will be considering Kafka within his biographical and socio-historical context as a Prague author, as well as approaching his works from several theoretical paradigms, ranging from the literary critics Stanley Corngold & Maurice Blanchot to social theorists such as Georges Bataille, Walter Benjamin, Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari, Slavoj Žižek, and Niklas Luhmann. Primary texts studied will include the novel *The Trial*, the novella *The Metamorphosis*, and the stories *The Judgment*, *In the Penal Colony*, *A Country Doctor*, *A Report to an Academy*, *The Hunter Gracchus*, *Researches of a Dog*, *The Burrow*, and *Josefine, or the Mouse Singer*.

**Methodology:** The format of this seminar will be a mixture of lecture and discussion. Students will be expected to have accomplished the assigned reading by the day indicated on the course outline (below), and should bring the reader to the seminar sessions, as we will always be referring to the texts assigned for the day. Students at the advanced B.A. level will be expected to read all the primary texts, and some of the background and critical materials indicated on the course outline, while students at the M.A. level must read the additional texts indicated. I will be giving introductory lectures concerning the day's material and critical approaches to Kafka, and then we will discuss the assigned works as a seminar, keeping in mind Hannah Arendt's metaphor that Kafka's texts are “blueprints,” and that the reader must erect the structure of meaning from these blueprints. We will be viewing a number of films, including films based on all of Kafka's novels, and scenes from films to help elucidate the stories.

**Time and Place:** Mondays 14:45–17:30, Anglo-American University.

**Texts:** There required seminar reader, and students will be required to obtain and read Kafka's *The Trial* (any edition, any language).

**Assessment:** Assessment for this course will be in the form of 1) **Attendance:** four absences will be excused, while each additional absence will drop the student half a letter grade; 2) A take-home mid-term & final, which will have additional instructions/questions for the M.A. students.

### Course Outline

#### Week 1: Introduction to Seminar.

**Topics:** Introduction to seminar; Kafka's Woodlouse & 2<sup>nd</sup> Order Observation; Critical Paradigms—Lacan, Deleuze & Guattari, Luhmann; Socio-Historical Context: Kafka's Europe.

**Readings:** *Introduction: Kafka's Europe*, Julian Preece.

#### Week 2: Kafka's Prague.

**Topics:** Kafka's Prague; Kafka's Biography—Myths and Realities.

**Readings:** *Myths and Realities in Kafka's Biography*, Anthony Northey.

**M.A. Readings:** *Prague Circles: Backgrounds and Methods, Conclusion to Prague Territories*, Scott Spector.

**Film:** *Who was Kafka?* directed by Richard Dindo (2005).

**Scenes:** *Kafka*, Steven Soderbergh (1992).

#### Week 3: Kafka's Literary & Intellectual Context—Reading Kafka.

**Topics:** Kafka, Nietzsche, Freud; Kafka & Modernism; Kafka & Expressionism; Hermeneutics of Reading Kafka.

**Readings:** *Nietzsche, Kafka, and Literary Paternity*, Stanley Corngold; *Franz Kafka: The Radical Modernist*, Stanley Corngold; *Kafka's Writing and Our Reading*, David Constantine.

**M.A. Readings:** *Introduction: Beginnings*, Stanley Corngold; *Reading Kafka*, Maurice Blanchot; *Kafka and Literature*, Maurice Blanchot.

#### Week 4: Kafka's Crisis—*The Judgment* & *The Man Who Disappeared*.

**Topics:** Kafka's Crisis: *The Judgment* (*Das Urteil*) & *The Man Who Disappeared* (*Amerika/Der Verschollene*): Examples of Anamorphosis.

**Readings:** *The Judgment* (1912), Franz Kafka.

**Scenes:** *Anamorph*, Henry Miller (2007).

**M.A. Readings:** *In the Circle of “The Judgment,”* Stanley Corngold; *The Man Who Disappeared: Kafka Imagining Amerika*, Douglas Shields Dix.

**Film:** *The Stoker*, 1<sup>st</sup> part of *Klassenverhältnisse*, Danièle Huillet & Jean-Marie Straub (1984).

**Week 5: Kafka's Crisis—*The Metamorphosis*.**

**Topics:** Kafka's Crisis—*The Metamorphosis* (*Die Verwandlung*); Metaphor & "Anaphor" in *The Metamorphosis*.

**Readings:** *The Metamorphosis* (1912), Franz Kafka.

**M.A. Readings:** *Kafka's The Metamorphosis: Metamorphosis of the Metaphor*, Stanley Corngold.

**Film:** *Nabokov on Kafka*, Peter Medak (1989).

**Week 6: Kafka's *The Trial* (I).**

**Topics:** *In the Penal Colony* as Prologue to *The Trial*; Kafka's Trial; Kafka and...Dickens? *Bleak House* as Precursor Text; Reading *The Trial* as Anamorphosis: *The Trial & The Truman Show*.

**Readings:** *In the Penal Colony* (1914), Franz Kafka; *Arrest, Conversation with Frau Gruback and then Fräulein Bürstner, Initial Interrogation* from *The Trial (Der Process)*, Franz Kafka.

**M.A. Readings:** *Franz Kafka: On the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of His Death*, Walter Benjamin (1934).

**Film:** *The Trial*, David Jones (1993), Part 1.

**Scenes:** *Bleak House*, BBC (2005); *The Truman Show*, Peter Weir (1998).

**Week 7: Kafka's *The Trial* (II).**

**Topics:** Reading *The Trial* as Anamorphosis: Students, Ushers, Floggers & Lawyers; Libidinal Flows & Women in *The Trial*.

**Readings:** *In the Empty Courtroom, The Student, The Offices of the Court, Fräulein Bürstner's Friend* (some editions will have this chapter at the end of the text), *The Flogger, K's Uncle, Leni*, from *The Trial (Der Process)*, Franz Kafka.

**Film:** *The Trial*, David Jones (1993), Part 2.

**Scene:** *The Trial*, Orson Welles (1962).

**Week 8: Mid-Term Break.**

**Week 9: Kafka's *The Trial* (III).**

**Topics:** Assemblages, System, Society; Kafka's "Turn": Kafka & Heidegger.

**Readings:** *Lawyer, Manufacturer, Painter; Block, The Businessman, Dismissal of the Lawyer; In the Cathedral; The End*, from *The Trial (Der Process)*, Franz Kafka.

**M.A. Readings:** *The Work and the Errant Word*, Maurice Blanchot; *Kafka & the Work's Demand*, Maurice Blanchot.

**Film:** *The Trial*, David Jones (1993), Part 3.

**Week 10: Stories from Kafka's Middle Period.**

**Topics:** *A Country Doctor* & Libidinal Wounds; *A Report to the Academy: Primatology, Human-ology, Alien-ology—Second-Order Observation; The Hunter Gracchus—Death Drive & Entre Deux Mortes*.

**Readings:** *A Country Doctor* (1916-1917), Franz Kafka; *A Report to the Academy* (1916-1917), Franz Kafka; *The Hunter Gracchus* (1917).

**M.A. Readings:** *Something to Do with Truth: Kafka's Later Stories*, Stanley Corngold.

**Scenes:** *Parsifal*, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg (1982); *Solaris*, Andrei Tarkovsky (1972); *Aliens*, James Cameron (1986); *Dead Man*, Jim Jarmusch (1995).

**Week 11: Kafka's Late Period: *Researches of a Dog & The Castle* (I).**

**Topics:** *Researches of a Dog—Philosophy & Anthropomorphism; The Castle (Das Schloss): Strategies & the System*.

**Readings:** *Researches of a Dog* (1920), Franz Kafka.

**M.A. Readings:** *Notes on Kafka*, Theodor Adorno (1967).

*Immanence and Desire, Proliferation of Series*, Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari.

**Film:** *The Castle (Das Schloss)*, Michael Haneke (1997), Part 1.

**Week 12: Kafka's Late Period: *The Castle* (II) & *The Burrow*.**

**Topics:** *The Castle (Das Schloss): Strategies & the System; The Burrow—Existential Modes*.

**Readings:** *The Burrow* (1923), Franz Kafka.

**M.A. Readings:** *Kafka: Should Kafka Be Burnt?* Georges Bataille (1957).

**Film:** *The Castle (Das Schloss)*, Michael Haneke (1997), Part 2.

**Week 13: *The Burrow: Kafka & Blanchot*.**

**Topics:** *The Burrow—The Outside*

**Readings:** *The Outside, the Night*, Maurice Blanchot; *The Madness of the Day*, Maurice Blanchot.

**Scenes:** *Three Women*, Robert Altman (1977); *San toit ni loi/Vagabond*, Agnès Varda (1985).

**Week 14: Kafka's Last Story: *Josefine, the Singer or The Mouse People*.**

**Topics:** *Josefine & the Role of the Artist*.

**Readings:** *Josefine, the Singer or The Mouse People* (1923), Franz Kafka.

**M.A. Readings:** *The Narrative Voice (the "he," the neutral)*, Maurice Blanchot.

**Scenes:** *Let's Get Lost*, Bruce Weber (1988); *Billy Holiday—The Ultimate Collection*. (2004).

**Week 15: Kafka Today.**

**Topics:** Kafka Today.

**Film:** *Den Brysomme mannen/The Bothered Man*, Jens Lien (2006).