
CORRESPONDENCE



We are working in partnership with another philosophy class at the Sacred Heart University in Connecticut. You will be maintaining correspondence with a peer at that institution, but you and your philosophical pen-pal will decide what form that correspondence will take.

Examples include letters, emails, downloadable/recordable chat threads, downloadable Twitter or Messenger threads, etc.

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PHIL 4310: GREAT WORKS PHILOSOPHICAL LETTERS

Dr. Taine Duncan, tduncan@uca.edu, Spring 2018



In this course, we will trace a history of important philosophical works written as letters, letters that philosophers wrote one another, and letters philosophers used to clarify their thoughts. As a capstone Great Works course, we will be using letters to cultivate refined philosophical writing and you will produce your own letter exchange about your research portfolios. Core: Z

As this is a capstone course, your primary assignment will be to produce a portfolio with a culminating research paper. This research paper may be on a self-chosen topic, but you must include the following in your portfolio:

- précis, outline, annotated bibliography
- sample correspondence
- draft with editorial evidence from peer
- final draft

60% of your grade

The other components of your grade include:

Discussion Board 20%

In-class Preparedness 20%





Policies Related to the Course and University May be Found on BlackBoard

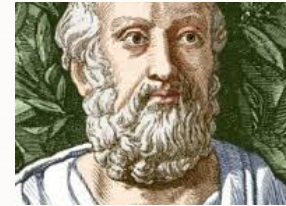
This course will be guided by the importance of the philosophical concept of parrhesia. This term, meaning fearless speech, has guided philosophers like Plato, Foucault, Yancy and others—but it is often misunderstood. Fearless or brave speech does not mean that you are entitled to say anything you want without impunity. Instead, it means that as a philosopher you are willing to be humble, vulnerable, and to take a risk in telling the truths that will challenge the world to become better.

As part of this principle, you will be asked to sign a pledge of mutual respect and honesty. You will be engaging in philosophical discourse with students both on and off campus, and so you must be willing to hold yourself accountable to this principle. This includes a strict plagiarism policy—as you must be honest and forthright to engage in parrhesia!

TIMELINE OF LETTERS

ANCIENT LETTERS: 353 BCE AND 65 CE

We will closely examine letters attributed to Plato, including the famous Seventh Letter. We will also examine letters written by Seneca to Lucilius. In each case, the letters address intersections between political philosophy and ontological commitments. However, each set of letters also introduces questions of authorship, veracity, and attribution—Plato may not have written his letters, and there may never have been a Lucilius!



Plato



Seneca the Younger

REPUBLIC OF WOMEN: 1630'S AND 1796

In the modern period of Western philosophy, many women participated in exchanges of philosophical dialogue and publication. However, much of the importance of these exchanges has been left from the dominant historical overview. In this section, we will reclaim letters from the prolific van Schurman and Wollstonecraft on the importance of women in philosophy. We will also examine questions of why these letters are no longer considered central to the canon.



Anna Maria van Schurman



Mary Wollstonecraft

ENLIGHTENMENT LETTERS: 1733 AND 1760'S

Voltaire and Kant were both central figures for the age of reason. Voltaire is most known for his philosophical novel *Candide*, while Kant is most cited for his 3 volumes of critical philosophy. However, each produced reflective work through the medium of letters. In this section, we will examine letters as tool for critical reflection and refinement of ideas.



Voltaire



Kant

CONTEMPORARY LETTERS: 1930'S-60'S & 2017

Philosophical letters have gained new possibilities, through ease of record keeping and potential avenues for open letters, philosophers can communicate intimate and challenging thoughts with a wide audience. In our final section, we will address this renewed ability for parrhesiastic philosophy through letters. Reading Arendt's letters on the holocaust, and Yancy's letters on racism, we will also discuss the ways in which timely and challenging ideas can be explored via letter.



Hannah Arendt



George Yancy