

TR 4:15-5:45 PM

DR. CAMISHA RUSSELL

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OFFICE HOURS: Mondays & Wednesdays 3:50-4:50 or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The popular *Hunger Games* trilogy consists of three novels marketed to young adults (but enjoyed more broadly) – *The Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire*, and *Mockingjay*. The stories take place in a dystopian future North America (Panem) which, following a series of environmental disasters, has been divided into a Capitol and 12 (13) Districts. The relationship between the ruling Capitol and the Districts (which produce the majority of the goods the capitol citizens consume) is one of domination, oppression and exploitation. Most shocking for readers is the fact that each year the Capitol demands that each district offer two of its children as tributes – competitors who will battle to the death in a manufactured arena while the rest of the country watches the event on television.

In this course, we will explore (primarily through philosophical lenses) a variety of themes present in the trilogy, including those of domination, oppression, injustice, inequality, excess, complicity, corruption, and war. On the brighter side, we will also look at morality, resistance, and methods for deconstructing or challenging the social order. We will consider both the world of the *Hunger Games* itself *and* what the novels can tell us about contemporary society. We will propose and discuss ways in which philosophical texts and theories can be applied to social issues in our society and in theirs.

The course will be divided into three units. We will begin in Unit One by looking at the Districts: What is life like for the people living there? Why do they consent to their conditions? How is power over the Districts maintained? In Unit Two, we will consider the Capitol. We'll talk about their excesses of consumption and body modification. We'll ask about their relationship to the media and how they can consider watching children kill each other as a superior form of entertainment. In Unit Three, we'll turn to the question of revolution. We'll discuss how resistance is sparked and cultivated. We'll ask whether there is such a thing as a just war and whether the war portrayed in the novels is one. We will consider what makes a revolution legitimate, and we'll compare what we see in the novels to contemporary social movements.

The *Hunger Games* is a thrilling and compelling read with impressive levels of nuance and complexity. Through this course, I hope not only that you will come to appreciate this literary work at a deeper level, but also that you will gain and appreciate new philosophical tools for questioning the society in which we live.

COURSE OVERVIEW

EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will identify and examine the relevance of themes from the Hunger Games to our contemporary society.
2. Students will discover how philosophical texts and approaches can be applied to contemporary social and political issues.
3. Students will practice applying a philosophical concept/theory/text to an example (literary or contemporary).

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the sources of social inequality? How is it maintained?
2. Is it possible to act ethically in a corrupt/unjust situation or society?
3. How does power mask its operation and hide its weaknesses?
4. Is capitalism compatible with key human values?
5. Why are people willing or even *eager* to watch others suffer?
6. When is violent resistance justified? And at what cost?

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Collins, Suzanne. *Catching Fire*. New York: Scholastic, 2013. Print.
- Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic, 2010. Print.
- Collins, Suzanne. *Mockingjay*. New York: Scholastic, 2010. Print.
- *Various other required readings will be made available via Canvas. Please be sure not only to read them, but also to bring them to class.*

COURSE WORK

- **Personal Journal:** Each student will keep a journal on Canvas in which he/she/they will briefly reflect on the day's class meeting (approx. 300 words), recording reactions to discussion, noting questions to be asked in future classes, and drawing connections between class discussion and other readings and ideas. **Fifteen** total entries are required.
- **Weekly Questions on Readings:** Each student will be assigned to either Tuesdays or Thursdays. On their assigned days, students must **post on Canvas and bring to class** three discussion questions pertaining to the readings due that day. Questions may be points of clarification about the reading or questions brought to mind from the readings. It is not necessary to address all readings in each post. **Eight** total posts are required.
- **Article Outlines:** Each student will choose/be assigned **two** different articles (of a particular type) for which they will create a detailed outline of each text's ideas and arguments.
- **Class Presentation:** Each student will deliver one presentation to the class on a topic of their choice. All topics must be approved by the professor, and the chosen topic will ideally tie into the student's final paper. The presentation should last 10-15 minutes, include a visual component, and be followed by prompts for class discussion.
- **Final Paper:** Work for your final paper will be divided into four components (not including your presentation work):
 - **Paper Abstract:** Each student will write an abstract for her/his intended paper. This abstract should indicate the thesis, primary sources, and key arguments of the paper.
 - **Exegesis of Philosophical Text:** Each student will write a critical explanation or interpretation of the philosophical text/theory they consider to be most central to their final paper. This exegesis can then be incorporated into the final paper.

- **Rough Draft/Peer Review:** Each student will complete a rough draft of her/his paper and participate in a peer review process designed to identify important revisions to be completed before turning in the final paper.
- **Final draft:** Each student will turn in an 8-10 page paper relevant to the goals of this course. The paper will include at least one primary philosophical text/theory applied to *The Hunger Games* trilogy **and/or** a contemporary example.

GRADING

Please keep in mind that A grades will not be awarded for work that merely satisfies the minimum requirements of a particular assignment. If you are seeking an A, you should strive to complete the assignment not merely adequately, but exceptionally. If, for any given assignment, it is not clear to you how to do so, please feel free to come and discuss it with me.

Component	Points in Final Grade
Personal Journal	15
Weekly Reading Questions	8
Article Outlines	2 x 5 = 10
Class Presentation	15
Paper Abstract	2
Exegesis	10
Rough Draft	7
Peer Review	3
Final Draft	30

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

Though we are learning remotely this term, this class is designed to facilitate real-time discussion and reflection on course materials and themes. I believe you will benefit from attending synchronous course meetings. That said, I understand that, especially during our turbulent times, circumstances beyond a student's control can make attendance difficult. Assignments missed due to an excused absence may be made up or turned in late. Just contact me at your earliest convenience.

HONOR CODE

Using the ideas of another person—be it a professional writer, speaker, or a classmate or friend—without proper acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism. Even when it is unintended, plagiarism carries significant disciplinary action. Do not take this issue lightly. You are responsible for reading, understanding, and adhering to the guidelines for acknowledging the work of others as outlined on the UO website:

<http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism>. Ignorance of the guidelines is not an acceptable excuse for student misconduct.

DISCRIMINATION

The University of Oregon affirms and actively promotes the right of all individuals to equal opportunity in education and employment without regard to any protected basis, including race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, marital status, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression or any other consideration not directly and substantively related to effective performance.

The university is committed to providing a respectful environment for all members of the campus community. Prohibited discrimination and discriminatory harassment, including any form of sexual harassment, which subvert the mission of the university and jeopardize the educational or employment experience of students, faculty, and staff, will not be tolerated. If you have a concern of any sort, contact the Office of Affirmative Action & Equal Opportunity:

<https://aaeo.uoregon.edu/content/raise-concern>.

Resources for people experiencing hate and discrimination can be found also on the following website: RESPECT.uoregon.edu and by calling 541-346-5555.

I support all students regardless of immigration status or country of origin. For more information and resources please visit our Dreamers page (<https://blogs.uoregon.edu/dreamers/>) and the Immigration FAQs page (http://international.uoregon.edu/immigration_faq). Students, remember, when interacting with faculty, staff, and offices around campus you are never required to reveal your status.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

According to the new Title IX policy (<https://titleix.uoregon.edu/employee-reporting-responsibilities-policy-overview>) only some UO employees are required reporters and they have to state this explicitly to you. Most regular faculty members as well as GEs are classified as “student-directed employees,” i.e. they are not mandatory reporters, which means that you can speak with them confidentially about issues of sexual harassment, although they may be required to give testimony in case of litigations. If you wish to speak to someone who can keep strict confidentially (also in case of litigations), you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO’s 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.

ACCESSIBILITY

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uaec@uoregon.edu.

OFFICE HOURS & COMMUNICATION

My virtual office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus and I will also be available at a variety of times by appointment. Please come and see me any time you are experiencing difficulty with the class material, would like more information about the texts we are reading, or have other more general questions about philosophy or your college education. Because I have a young child, you should not expect to receive responses to emails on evenings or weekends, but I will do my best to respond to any communication within one business day.

COURSE CALENDAR

UNIT ONE: THE DISTRICTS		
W e e k 1	Tue 9/29	<i>Syllabus review; Start watching The Hunger Games (1h10m)</i>
	Thu 10/1	Readings due: <i>The Hunger Games</i> , Part I <i>Finish watching The Hunger Games (1h10m); Introductions; Class expectations</i>
W e e k 2	Tue 10/6	Readings due: <i>HG</i> , Part II; excerpt from Butler's <i>Gender Trouble</i> ; "The Importance of Being Katniss"; "Of Queer Necessity" <i>Go over presentation topics; discuss Katniss and gender performance</i>
	Thu 10/8	Readings due: <i>HG</i> , Part III; excerpts from Hobbes' <i>Leviathan</i> ; "Safe to Do What?" DUE: Presentation preferences <i>Discuss Hobbes' social contract & purpose of the Games</i>
W e e k 3	Tue 10/13	Readings due: <i>Catching Fire</i> , Part I; Foucault's "The Mesh of Power"; "Communal Spectacle" <i>Discuss nature of power, uses of political violence</i>
	Thu 10/15	Readings due: <i>CF</i> , Part II; Young "Five Faces of Oppression" <i>Discuss oppression (in that world and ours)</i>
W e e k 4	Tue 10/20	Readings due: <i>CF</i> , Part III; <i>Colonialism</i> , excerpts <i>Discuss life in the Districts and colonial power</i>
	Thu 10/22	Readings due: <i>Mockingjay</i> , Part I; "Coal Dust and Ballads" <i>Watch: Harlan County USA (103m)</i>
UNIT TWO: THE CAPITOL		
W e e k 5	Tue 10/27	Readings due: <i>Mockingjay</i> , Part II; "Discipline and the Docile Body"; <i>Three student presentations</i>
	Thu 10/29	Readings due: <i>Mockingjay</i> , Part III; "The Joy of Watching Others Suffer"; <i>Three student presentations</i>

W e e k 6	Tue	11/3	Readings due: "Real or Not Real" <i>Discuss the Hunger Games and reality television; watch clip from "UNreal"; two student presentations</i>
	UNIT THREE: THE REVOLUTION		
	Thu	11/5	Readings due: "Sometimes the World is Hungry for People Who Care" <i>Discuss care ethics and resistance; three student presentations</i>
W e e k 7	Tue	11/10	Readings due: "A Political Overview of Panem" <i>Discuss other methods of resistance to power in Panem; three student presentations</i>
	Thu	11/12	Readings due: "The Ethics of War" DUE: Paper abstracts <i>Discuss whether and how rebellion can be considered just; three student presentations</i>
W e e k 8	Tue	11/17	Readings due: <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> , Chapters 1-2 <i>Discuss bases for social transformation; three student presentations</i>
	Thu	11/19	Readings due: <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> , Chapter 4 DUE: Exegesis <i>Discuss Mockingjay and Alma Coin as revolutionary leader</i>
W e e k 9	Tue	11/24	Readings due: "Martial morality. Re-imagining violence with Fanon and Butler" <i>Discuss violence and humanization</i>
	Thu	11/26	Thanksgiving NO CLASS
W e e k 10	Tue	12/1	Readings due: Selections from <i>Pure Fire</i> <i>Watch: "Arresting Power: Resisting Police Violence in Oregon" (84 min)</i>
	Thu	12/3	DUE: Rough Draft of Final Paper <i>Peer Review; class wrap-up</i>
Final Paper due Tuesday, 12/8 @ 10pm			