

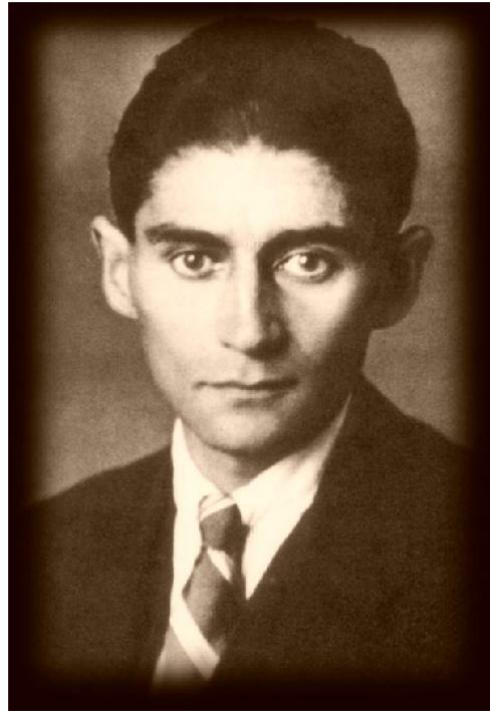
# Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures

## GER 322H Spring 2010 Kafka in Context

**Times:** Tue 2:10 – 4:00pm

**Venue:** VC 206

**Professor:** John K. Noyes  
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### Course Outline

How do we know how to live life in the modern world, when none of our points of reference seem to hold any reliability or stability? How can we even be sure that we are human, and not some strange, deformed animal with consciousness? Are we perhaps moving through life in a dream, or a nightmare? For Franz Kafka (1883-1924), the German-Jewish-Czech writer who lived most of his life in Prague, the only way to answer these and other similarly troubling questions was to make them the basis of his writing. Kafka's works offer a unique model for thinking about human life in the modern world, about consciousness, the body, dreaming and waking, the nature of the social world, and many similar issues. And embedded in his writing is a set of unique ideas about how to read literature. In this course we will set out in pursuit of his models and ideas.

### Texts:

Students are required to purchase the following books, available at University of Toronto Bookstore:

- Franz Kafka, *Die Erzählungen. Originalfassung* (Frankfurt: Fischer 1996)
- Franz Kafka, *Der Prozess* (Stuttgart: Reclam 1995)

## **Coursework and Marking Scheme**

Students participating in this course will be required to attend class regularly and participate actively in classroom discussions. You should read the prescribed texts before the relevant class meetings, and complete assigned work on time. You will also be required to complete one text description, one article summary, and one term paper.

Attendance and active participation	15%
One text description (post online by 21 January)	15%
One article summary (due 15 March)	15%
Online participation	15%
Term paper (due 12 noon Monday 7 March)	40%

*Attendance and participation:* This course is evaluated according to your readings, term paper, web-postings and classroom discussion. The aim is to improve your language skills, your critical analysis, and your ability to interact constructively with others in discussing literary texts. German is the classroom language. You will also gain points for coming punctually and well-prepared to class. That means having completed the week's reading, participating actively in class discussions, and submitting work on time. Late essays will not be accepted without a medical certificate.

*Article summary:* Kafka's writings have generated enormous amounts of critical commentary, some of it convincing, some less so. I'd like you to locate a journal article on one of the stories or on "Der Prozess". Choose an article that seems to promise a way of unlocking the story, an approach that appeals to you in one way or another. I will hold a research workshop early in the term to explain how to find this material. Write a one-page summary of the basic argument of the article. Submit this paper any time before **15 March**.

*Text description.* This is not intended to be an actual interpretation, but the first steps in the direction of an interpretation. Choose one of the short prose pieces in "Die Erzählungen".

Describe the text in German to the class, taking account of some of the following points:

- Who is the narrator? (Wer ist der Erzähler?)
- What does the narrator's voice sound like? (Wie hört sich die Erzählstimme an?)
- What is the action? What happens (Was ist die Handlung? Was passiert?)
- What are the main images? (Was sind die Hauptbilder?)
- What contradictions do you see in the text? (Welche Widersprüche finden Sie im Text?)
- What questions does the text raise for you? (Welche Fragen stellt der Text?)
- Any other points you think are significant in the story

Sign up on the bulletin board listing your choice of text, making sure no-one else is using that text. You must list the text you wish to interpret on the bulletin board before **21 January**.

Write a maximum of 4 pages double spaced Times New Roman 12. Write the paper in German. I will correct your German, but I will not subtract points for minor grammatical and stylistic mistakes. However, if your German is so poor that I cannot understand what you are trying to say, it will affect your overall grade. Text descriptions are not handed in. They are to be posted on the course Blackboard site before **1 February**. We will have a feedback session in class on **8 February**.

*Online Participation:* You are expected to make regular postings on the course website's bulletin board. For each week, there will be a thread with the guiding question for the week's reading, which I will post. You have as much freedom as you want with your postings, provided of course

they have something to do with Kafka. You can give a response to my question, or make any comment you want about the text for that week. You can also pick up existing threads and comment on another student's comments. Make at least one posting (but not more than three postings) for every week that questions are listed. You will be graded on quality, not quantity. Remember the keywords for your postings: *kurz, sachlich, auf Deutsch!*

*Term Paper:* The paper is to be written on a topic which you will choose yourself, in consultation with me. Ideally, your term paper will deal with the same text you chose for the text description, and it will build on the insights you gained in that exercise. You will begin your paper by explaining the problem, then setting forth how you intend to address it. You will make reference to the text(s) to support your ideas. And you will make reference to at least one journal article or book chapter on the text(s) in question. Your essays will be between 1,500 and 2,000 words printed double-spaced Times New Roman. After I have graded your essay you have the option of re-writing and re-submitting it. Write the paper in German. I will correct your German, but I will not subtract points for minor grammatical and stylistic mistakes. However, if your German is so poor that I cannot understand what you are trying to say, it will affect your overall grade. Submit this paper any time before noon on **Monday 7 March**. Re-written papers must be submitted before **28 March**.

*Jetzt gehts aber auf Deutsch weiter....*

#### **Seminarplan:**

#### **Woche 1 (11.1.) Einführung (1): Kafka und seine Zeit**

#### **Woche 2 (18.1.) Einführung (2): Kafka Lesen, Kafkas Themen**

*Text(e):*

Die Verwandlung  
In der Strafkolonie

*Leifrage:* Was sind Kafkas Hauptthemen? Inwiefern sind das Themen seiner Zeit?

Geben Sie den Text, den Sie "beschreiben" werden, vor 21. Januar bekannt

#### **Woche 3 (25.1.) Das Leben in der Familie. Ort der Macht.**

*Text(e):*

Die Verwandlung

*Leifrage:* Beschreiben Sie die Beziehung zwischen Individuum und Familie in *Die Verwandlung*. Wie entstehen Machtbeziehungen in der Familie? Was haben diese Machtbeziehungen mit denen ausserhalb der Familie zu tun?

Textbeschreibung vor 1. Februar einreichen

#### **Woche 4 (1.2.) Der Vater, die Gesellschaft**

*Text(e):*

Das Urteil  
Brief an den Vater (Auszüge)

*Leifrage:* Wie sieht Kafka die Vater-Sohn Beziehung? Warum ist ihm diese Beziehung lebenswichtig?

### **Woche 5 (8.2.) Klassendiskussion zu den Textbeschreibungen**

### **Woche 6 (15.2.) Mensch-Sein: der Körper und die Identität**

*Text(e):*  
Ein Bericht für eine Akademie

*Leifrage:* Welches Bild gibt Kafka vom Körper und vom Mensch-Sein? Was sagt Kafka über die Erkennbarkeit und Erzählbarkeit des eigenen Lebens?

### **Woche 7 (22.2.) Der Körper und die Macht**

*Text(e):*  
In der Strafkolonie

*Leifrage:* Was hat die Macht mit dem Schreiben auf dem Körper zu tun? Welche Formen der Macht werden im neuen und alten Regime ausgeübt?

### **Woche 8 (1.3.) Das Sein und die Welt**

*Text(e):*  
Der Bau

*Leifrage:* Was ist der Bau und was hat er mit dem Leben zu tun? Wie stellt Kafka die Beziehung zwischen Innen-und Aussenwelt dar?

Semesterarbeit vor 7. März einreichen

### **Woche 9 (8.3.) Das Wissen im Text**

*Text(e):*  
Die Vorüberlaufenden  
Das Schweigen der Sirenen  
Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer

*Leifrage:* Wie sieht bei Kafka die narrative Konstruktion des Wissens aus? Was sind die Grenzen des Wissens?

Artikelsynopse vor 15. März einreichen

### **Woche 10 (15.3.) Der Traum, das Schreiben und die Interpretation**

*Text(e):*

Ein Traum

*Leifrage:* Was ist für Kafka der Traum, was ist die Realität? Warum ist ihm das Schreiben so sehr wichtig? Was sind die Folgen für das Lesen und Interpretieren seiner Texte (und vielleicht auch literarischer Texte überhaupt)?

### **Woche 11 (22.3.) Der Körper und das Gesetz**

*Text(e):* Der Prozess

*Leifrage:* Wie wird das Gesetz erkannt, formuliert, vollstreckt? Wer sind die Hüter des Gesetzes?

### **Woche 12 (29.3.) Das Wissen, die Interpretation, die Macht**

*Text(e):*

Der Prozess

Vor dem Gesetz

*Leifrage:* Welcher Zusammenhang erstellt Kafka zwischen Wissen, Macht, und Interpretation?

### **Woche 13 (5.4.) Verfilmungsstrategien**

*Text(e):*

Der Prozess

*Leifrage:* Wie werden Kafkas Themen in Film realisiert?