

--UofT / GER322H / Winter 2022--

KAFKA IN CONTEXT

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Office: Odette Hall #309
Hours: Tue 1-3

Class meets **T 10-12** at **CR 403**

DESCRIPTION

Liebster Max, meine letzte Bitte: Alles, was sich in meinem Nachlass ... an Tagebüchern, Manuskripten, Briefen, fremden und eignen, Gezeichnetem und so weiter findet, restlos und ungelesen zu verbrennen, ebenso alles Geschriebene oder Gezeichnete, das du oder andre, die du in meinem Namen darum bitten sollst, haben. Briefe, die man dir nicht übergeben will, soll man wenigstens selbst zu verbrennen sich verpflichten.

Thus begins a letter by Franz Kafka to Max Brod that was found in Kafka's desk after his death in 1924. Brod disregarded his friend's request and introduced the world to many of Kafka's greatest works, key components of a modest corpus that is now regarded as one of the greatest in 20th century literature. In this course, we will place Kafka under investigation. How do we approach stories that the author himself condemned to destruction? How does this "death sentence" correspond to the trials and punishments of Kafka's protagonists? What do these protagonists – helpless humans, introspective animals and hybrid creatures – reveal about the challenge of understanding the self and the world in modernity?

OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to help you improve your German skills by grappling with one of the language's most enigmatic voices. We focus mainly on Kafka's shorter fiction and explore scholarly approaches to his work. The course has a significant writing component: Through regular response papers, you will practice developing and articulating your own interpretations of challenging texts. An article review requires you to research one of Kafka's shorter texts. A final essay allows you to demonstrate your acquired close reading skills and to integrate relevant research.

REQUIREMENTS

Thorough preparation, regular attendance and active participation! You need to prepare all assigned materials prior to each session and to complete all assignments on time. Arrive punctually and be ready to engage in lively discussion! Have fun sharing your thoughts and ideas! Note: Primary texts will be posted on Quercus. Students are required to use these texts (i.e., no other editions).

EVALUATION

Prep./Part.	20%	thorough preparation, regular attendance, <u>active</u> participation
3 Response Papers	30%	reading reflections in response to questions, 300 words each
Article Review	20%	1-page handout to be presented and discussed in class
Final Essay	30%	prospectus (300 words), essay (1000-1200 words), bibliography