

The University of Toronto
KAFKA IN CONTEXT
German 322H / Fall 2017

Instructor: **PROFESSOR JOHN ZILCOSKY**
Office: Northrop Frye 214

German / Comparative Literature
Office Hours: Tues. 4-5 PM or by appointment

Class meets on **Tuesdays, 2-4 PM in VC 304**

DESCRIPTION:

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 Kafka, 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 transform them into literature. His works offer unique models for thinking about human life in the modern world, about the mind, the body, dreaming and waking, and the nature of the social world. And embedded in his writing is a set of inimitable ideas about how to read literature. In this course we will set out in pursuit of these models and ideas.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Purchase these books; please order books well before the semester begins, so that you have them by the beginning of class. For purchasing, try the links below; I will also send other possible links to you via Blackboard.

You must purchase these editions of these two books. Do not purchase other editions; they will not have the proper pagination (if you have questions, please contact me):

Franz Kafka, *Die Verwandlung* (edited by Marjorie L. Hoover) (ISBN: 0393095339):

<https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/SearchResults?sts=t&an=&tn=&kn=&isbn=0393095339&sortby=96>

Franz Kafka, *Der Proceß* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994) (ISBN: 3596124433)

https://www.amazon.ca/gp/offer-listing/3596124433/ref=sr_1_1_olp?ie=UTF8&qid=1504008724&sr=8-1&keywords=3596124433

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

NB: After the first introductory session, **the entire course will be conducted in German (i.e., class discussion as well as all writing assignments and everything else will be in German)**

- I. *Careful reading of assigned texts.* Before each new assignment, you will receive study questions to guide your reading.
- II. *Short responses to study questions:* see requirement #1; I will collect your responses each class. Please keep all of your responses in a folder; I will then collect the folder at the end of the semester. **Study questions can only be submitted in class (not over email); late study questions are not accepted.**
- III. *Class participation:* your answers to the assigned study questions will prepare you for this.
- IV. *Leading Class Discussion:* One week ahead of time, in class (not over email), you will (alone or, in some cases, a group of two) give the entire class specific tasks to prepare: study questions, specific passages to consider more closely, etc. This will provide the basis for a discussion of at least ten (10) minutes. Remember that the discussions will be as interesting as you make them for yourself and the rest of the class. When in doubt about how to do this (and even when not), feel free to talk to me.
- V. *Mid-term test:* one hour, in class on **October 17th**. You must take the test on this date; **no make-up will be offered.**
- VI. *Final Paper:* 1000 words. I will hand out guidelines later in the term. **Due on Dec. 5th, in class. Late papers not accepted.**
- VII. *Attendance:* Attendance is mandatory. I will assume that two (2) unexcused absences in the course of the semester mean that you are no longer interested in pursuing the course.

MARKING

Short Responses to Study Questions	17%
Leading Class Discussion	16%
Mid-Term Test	15%
Final paper	35%
Attendance and Participation	17%

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

September 12: Introduction: “My Life is a Hesitation before Birth” (Kafka’s life; “modern” art and writing; how to read Kafka)

I. Waking as an “Ungeziefer”: Humans/Animals; Fathers/Sons; Dreams/Reality

September 19: *Die Verwandlung* (part 1)

September 26: *Die Verwandlung* (part 2)

October 3: *Die Verwandlung* (part 3)

II. Before the Law: Joseph K.’s “Trial,” the Mysteries of Power, the “Kafkaesque”

October 10: “Verhaftung,” “Gespräch mit Frau Grubach / Dann Fräulein Bürstner,” “Der Prügler” (from *Der Proceß*)

October 17: MIDTERM TEST (first hour); “Vor dem Gesetz” (from *Der Proceß*) (second hour)

October 24: “Vor dem Gesetz” (cont’d) and “Ende” (from *Der Proceß*)

October 31: Film: *The Trial* (Orson Welles); Read “Kafkaesk”
JZ HANDS OUT FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT

November 7: FALL READING WEEK (NO CLASS)

III. Love, Terror, Death: Kafka’s Last Years

November 14: “Ein Landarzt” (available on Blackboard)

November 21: “Eine kaiserliche Botschaft” (available on Blackboard)

November 28: “Ein altes Blatt” (available on Blackboard)

Dec. 5: “Ein Hungerkünstler” (available on Blackboard):

FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS on Dec. 5th; no late papers accepted