

Theological Issues in 20th and 21st Century Fiction
LSHV 485-01

Wednesdays, 6:30 – 9:30, September 5 – December 5, no class November 22
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This seminar explores theological issues raised in recent best selling, prize winning fiction (Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*, Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*, Edward P. Jones's *All Aunt Hagar's Children*, Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* and Annie Dillard's *The Maytrees*) against a background of earlier, theologically sophisticated literary works (T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*, Shusako Endo's *Silence*, and Walker Percy's *Lancelot*). Each work offers a unique window on the present and an opportunity to take theological bearings in a rapidly changing world.

A background in theology is not required for this course, though the writings assume a basic familiarity with the Gospel.

General Learning Goals and Outcomes

The Graduate Liberal Studies Program at Georgetown University offers a course of study which engages students in reading, research, reflection, discussion, and writing. In the pursuit of the degree, students are to discern and wrestle with the content generally associated with the "liberal" arts in the root meaning of that term, namely, what it means for human beings to be endowed with freedom and what ennobles and enhances human freedom. Two goals of the program in general and of this seminar in particular are to analyze and assess human values (who are we and what ought we to do?) and to undertake such study in an interdisciplinary fashion. The intention is to draw from the social sciences as well as from those fields generally defined as the humanities (e.g., **theology**, philosophy, **literature**, and art), recognizing that the moral dimension of human life embraces social, political, and economic relationships as well as personal choices.

Sept. 5	Euripides's <i>Alcestis</i>
Sept. 12	T.S. Eliot's <i>The Cocktail Party</i>
Sept. 19	Shusaku Endo's <i>Silence</i>
Sept. 26	Walker Percy's <i>Lancelot</i>
Oct. 4	Virginia Woolf's <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
Oct. 11	Michael Cunningham's <i>The Hours</i>
Oct. 18	Ian McEwan's <i>Atonement</i>
Oct. 25	Yann Martel's <i>Life of Pi</i>
Nov. 1	Sue Monk Kidd's <i>Secret Life of Bees</i>
Nov. 8	Edward Jones's <i>All Aunt Hagar's Children</i> , selected stories
Nov. 15	Annie Dillard's <i>The Maytrees</i>
Nov. 22	No class – Thanksgiving holiday
Nov. 29	Marilynne Robinson's <i>Gilead</i>
Dec. 5	TBD

Three short (3-4 page) papers will be required of all who are registered for the course. At the end of each class meeting, participants will be given topics for possible papers related

to the following class's assigned reading. Participants will be free to submit papers on any of the assigned readings.

Participants will also be expected to submit a more substantial (10 page minimum) research paper. This paper will be due December 12. **All papers must be meticulously proofread and submitted on time. Late papers will be accepted, but will be subject to a letter grade penalty.**

Please note: *Registrants should read and be prepared to discuss Euripides's Alcestis for the first class meeting.*

Academic Standards: MALS and DLS students are responsible for upholding the Georgetown University Honor System and adhering to the academic standards included in the Honor Code Pledge stated below:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor; and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

Disability Notice: If you believe you have a disability, you should contact the Academic Resource Center—Suite 335, Leavey Center (arc@georgetown.edu)—for further information. This office is responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.