

**PHIL 480.001: Philosophy and Literature**  
**T/R 2:00 - 3:15pm**

T. S. Eliot writes that philosophy and literature are two different languages about the same world.

What are these 'languages'? If different, do they think, speak, and reveal the world differently? Is one more 'rational' and the other 'irrational'? Is one illustrative and the other assertorial? Is one more true than the other? Further, how does literature call forth thinking and reflection of the world? What 'kind' of thinking, what kind of reflection, is literature? How does philosophy call forth thinking and reflection of the world? What 'kind' of thinking, what kind of reflection, is philosophy? And what is nature of the relation of philosophy and literature: do literature and philosophy quarrel, as Plato depicts them? Or are they allies, complementing one another in our beautiful human struggle for deepening thinking, experience, and feeling?

The course will examine what is philosophy and what is literature, each in light of the other and their relation, encounter, and interplay. The possibilities for mutual illumination are vast. Our course readings will exemplify both literature and philosophy. We will consider matters of craft and form, imagination and imagery, experience and reasoning, author and reader, *poiesis* and *mimesis*, and substantive philosophical questions in the lights of philosophical and literary modes.

We will read closely a range of philosophical authors at the intersection of philosophy and literature. Our readings will usually be relatively short to allow us close and slow reading. Readings will include Jorge Luis Borges' mind-bending philosophical fictions, Wallace Stevens' cerebral modern poetry, Eva Brann on imagination, and Martin Heidegger on poetry, language, thought. Additional texts will likely include Rilke, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Faulkner, Tanizaki, Sophocles, Zhuangzi, Heraclitus, Benjamin, Pippin, Manguel, Harvey.

The majority of our course texts will be provided as PDFs at no cost on Canvas. I'm anticipating (at most) two required paperback book purchases: Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions* and Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, and Thought* (current total cost of the two books purchased new on Amazon is \$26).

Course requirements include mandatory class attendance and participation, thoughtful reading of assigned texts, occasional reading quizzes, brief response writings, one or two polished short essays (4-6pp.), and a take-home final paper (8-10pp.). Students taking the course for graduate credit will be encouraged to write a longer final paper.

Prerequisite: one Philosophy course, or permission of the instructor. Students pursuing degrees in all areas of study are welcome.