Art requires philosophy, just as philosophy requires art. Otherwise what would become of beauty?

Paul Gauguin

Reading is a means of thinking with another person’s mind; it forces you to stretch your own.

Charles Scribner Jr.

Art is the signature of civilizations.

Beverly Sills

Storytelling is something that can awaken attentiveness, engagement, and empathy to a life that isn’t one’s own. And to be attentive, engaged, empathetic: That is moral.

Rebecca Goldstein ("Seed: The Moral Clout of Storytelling")

Why write? To read what I’ve written. Why read what you’ve written? Because for all its possible flaws and omissions no one else could have written it.

Joyce Carol Oates (Georgia Review)

This semester students will undertake a concentrated focus on a comprehensive research and writing assignment. A subject will be selected from the Nobel Laureates in Literature, Science and Peace, a list that dates back to the start of the twentieth century. This special project is intended to develop more sophisticated academic skills by concentrating on a comprehensive research and writing exercise, with each student choosing her or his own Laureate to study. The assignment page of the syllabus provides details.

The books the class will read together are a collection of diverse texts, beginning with the South African author, John Coetzee, who won the 2003 Nobel Prize for Literature. We are reading his fictional essay on the question of justice for animals, an unusual book based on Coetzee’s lecture given for Princeton’s prestigious Tanner Series. The last three books, by renowned authors (who are not Laureates), include British author Virginia Woolf’s novel, Mrs. Dalloway. Her novel relates one day in the life of a socialite planning a party, but is about many things, particularly the loss of certainty in the aftermath of the First World War. Next we will read Ann Patchett’s prize-winning novel, Bel Canto, set in South America. This story relates the danger of contemporary terrorism at the intersection of art and politics. And we will end the semester, and the year, with a renowned classic, already familiar to many students, Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited. Huxley’s prophetic concerns on threats to humanity from overpopulation to propaganda to weapon proliferation, for example, are vital issues of the day and certainly, as do all our readings, encompass aesthetics, authority and values.
REQUIRED BOOKS (Bookstore Editions):

*Lives of the Animals*, John Coetzee  
*Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf  
*Bel Canto*, Ann Patchett  
*Brave New World and the Brave New World Revisited*, Aldous Huxley

SCHEDULE

January 9: Poetry  
The course

How we treat animals is of no importance except insofar as being cruel to animals may accustom us to being cruel to Humans. *(...Animals)*

January 11: *Lives of the Animals*, Introduction and Chapter 1

January 16: *Lives of the Animals*, Chapter 11 and the four reflections

18: Library Research Seminar (details TBA)

January 23: Film Scenes: “Babe” and “March of the Penguins”  
Discussion continues

25: Group presentation on *...Animals*

As a cloud crosses the sun, silence falls on London; and falls on the mind. Effort ceases. Time flaps on the mast. There we stop; there we stand. Rigid, the skeleton of habit alone upholds the human frame. *(Mrs. Dalloway)*

January 30/February 1: *Mrs. Dalloway*  
*[1/30 Animals paper due]*

February 6/8 Film Scenes from “Mrs. Dalloway”  
Discussion continues

February 13  
15 Group presentation on *Mrs. Dalloway*  
Library Hour on Nobel Laureate Research
“You are a prisoner,” she said, but without much conviction. She would never raise her gun to a priest and so she pointed her finger at him instead. “I have every right to hear what you are saying.”

February 20:

Bel Canto

February 22:

Botany Walk

February 27/March 1: Bel Canto, discussion continues

March 6:

Bel Canto student presentation

March 8:

In class review of student laureate project status

March 13/15:

Brave New World

March 19-23:

SPRING BREAK

March 27/29:

Brave New World Revisited

SPECIAL NOTE: RESEARCH DAY CONFERENCE ON APRIL 4th, GC BALLROOMS

April 3:

Brave New World student presentation

April 5:

Sculpture Walk

April 10, 12 & 17:

Oral reports on Nobel Laureate projects

Nobel paper may be turned in on the 10th, 12th or 17th

April 19:

LAST CLASS: SUMMARY & CELEBRATION

[2/20 Mrs. Dalloway paper due]

[3/15 Bel Canto paper due]

[4/5 Brave New World paper due]
ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

PAPERS:

Choose two of the four course books to write a brief (four pages should suffice) essay, which may be on any topic that reflects the course theme of aesthetics, values or authority—and is directly related to, and relies on the text. Each essay is expected to include a minimum of one secondary source. You may, with permission, choose another interpretive mode other than critical writing. See schedule for due dates.

NOBEL LAUREATE PROJECT:

Since 1901 the Nobel Committee has named annual (minus several exceptions) Nobel Laureates in Literature, Science and Peace. The list of honorees includes, as expected, many of the renowned authors, scientists and activists of the twentieth century, but also features Laureates, who once so revered, are little known today, either for reasons of neglect, politics or shifting trends. Early in the semester students will peruse the list and select a Laureate, famous or forgotten, to study for a focused, serious undertaking in research and writing. Caution is advised, particularly for now obscure Laureates, as securing, for example, out-of-print books from interlibrary loan or other sources will take time. To facilitate research skills, students will have guided instruction with library staff and several class meetings in the library. Students may submit a Poster project, which has strict guidelines see: http://honors.fiu.edu/srai/conf06/index/html.

Planning steps:

1. **Peruse** the Nobel list, the Internet and library holdings to select a Laureate. Any facet of interest may be utilized; era, nationality or theme, for example. The Nobel site is: <www.nobelprize.org/index.html>

2. **Scan** primary works, criticism, biography and related data as background to formulate a plan. Begin thinking about a focus of exploration and securing primary and critical books and articles.

3. **Read**, and as you read, remember to think critically and take careful research notes. Index cards are still useful for this purpose, or use a computer, as you prefer. Hopefully, this exercise will lead to a precise and interesting topic, and even, if creativity and good fortune meet — an original essay. As you develop your topic, keep in mind: aesthetics, authority and
values. At this stage, a thoughtful, descriptive paragraph and tentative title is expected (the date I have set is 2/6).

4. **Write** the outline and begin the first draft. As rewriting is a major key to a first-class essay, considerable effort is expected at this stage. The goal is to develop a polished essay.

5. **Bask** — assuming you have worked earnestly and diligently you will have taken your academic skills to a new level of achievement. You should feel good about it.

Option: If you have a special colleague in the class and can agree on a topic as well as a research/writing plan, you may work as a collaborative team, with permission.

**GROUP PRESENTATION:**

Planning, preparation, participation and effectiveness by each member of a group will all be considered a part of the assignment. This semester, presentations will not be graded, with the exception of a penalty grade for a sub-standard response.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION:**

Students are expected to engage in class discussion, which is facilitated by advance preparation in such ways as noting interesting passages, articulating questions, extra-curricular research and offering connections within the text and/or to other art forms. I will ask students to email me “questions” and/or “ideas” before the class in which a particular text is to be discussed.

**NOTE:**

We will take advantage, when feasible, of on-campus visiting lecturers, theatre performances and related events as the schedule permits.
UNIVERSITY AND COURSE POLICIES:

Strict adherence to the University Code of Academic Conduct, which is available in the Student Handbook and on the University website, as well as the Honors College Policy and consequences in regard to violations, is mandatory. Particular attention should be given to the category of Plagiarism, as non-adherence will result in applying the designated actions in regard to student standing.

Two absences accompanied by a legitimate excuse and two late arrivals are permitted; more than this is subject to grade penalty.

GRADING:

Nobel Laureate project: 45%
Each of two papers: 25%
Collegiality & Participation: 5%