

Law and Literature Reading List, Spring 2022

This class satisfies the writing (“W”) requirement. Your grade is based on your papers (3 short ones, due at semester thirds, or you may consolidate two into one longer paper), class participation, and weekly quizzes.

Your grade formula is the minimum of (quiz grades, and 0.5 paper grade + 0.5 class participation grade). In other words, if your quiz grades are lower than that specified weighted average, your quiz grade is your grade. Otherwise I average your paper and participation grades and this is almost always what happens because people typically come well prepared for the quizzes and ace them.

The honor code covers all aspects of this class and please let me know if appropriate allowances need to be made for student disabilities. I note also that some of the readings cover or describe some violent and traumatic acts; if you prefer a substitute assignment for any particular reading or topic, please let me know.

Professor Tyler Cowen, x2312 (Fairfax), x4910 (Arlington) tcowen@gmu.edu.

Materials and Assignments:

Please read the play “Trifles” by Susan Glaspell, for the first class meeting, and be prepared to discuss it.

The New English Bible, Oxford Study Edition

Guantanamo Diary, by Mohamedou Ould Slahi

Glaspell’s Trifles, available on-line.

Year’s Best SF 9, edited by David G. Hartwell and Kathryn Cramer, used or Kindle edition is recommended

The Metamorphosis, In the Penal Colony, and Other Stories, by Franz Kafka, edited and translated by Joachim Neugroschel.

In the Belly of the Beast, by Jack Henry Abbott.

Juan Gabriel Vasquez, Reputations

Sherlock Holmes, The Complete Novels and Stories, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, volume 1, also on-line.

I, Robot, by Isaac Asimov.

The Pledge, Friedrich Durrenmatt.

Shaka Sengkor, Writing my Wrongs: Life, Death, and Redemption in an American Prison

Ian McEwan, The Children Act

Curtis Dawkins, The Graybar Hotel

Sarah Langford, In Your Defence

Movies: To be determined.

Course and learning outcomes:

Learn about the law through fiction, gaining alternate perspectives from some of humanity's greatest minds

Develop the ability to read (and reread) texts at higher levels

Writing and analytical skills

Clarity and argumentation

Develop listening and participation skills in spontaneous discussions

Develop preparation skills for said discussions