Discovery and Recognition in Narrative, Film and Drama
Text and Idea
Core 400 110 Fall 2018
Tu Th 12:30-1:45pm
Mercer 306

Class Instructor: Professor Philip Kennedy (Philip.Kennedy@nyu.edu)
Class meetings: TBD
Location: TBD
Kennedy office hours: after each class for an hour and a half
Credit Hours: 4

Course Description: Across all cultures, stories are fashioned to withhold information at first, holding our attention through suspense. They then produce disclosures at crucial moments of *denouement*. This dynamic movement from ignorance to knowledge, which creates meaning, is deemed essential in the *Poetics* of Aristotle, especially when it takes the form of the discovery—or recognition—of previously unknown identity. It exists in all literatures independently of Aristotle’s prescriptions. Discovery is also essential to
both high literature and low, across genres, epochs and artistic media. Tracing an arc from the ancient world to the present day, this course will end by showing how the epistemology of modern storytelling, across cultures, disturbs the familiar patterns of clear and comforting revelation associated (often mistakenly, in fact) with classic genres. Recognition is an important idea in all cultures: it can take an Aristotelian formal shape (which is structural as well as thematic); it also works in different ways in different genres, or has different emphases (Oedipus reveals tragic fate, the Odyssey deals, among other things with imposture, Genesis 37-45 with providential and divine orchestration of human lives) and coalesces with ancillary ideas (of return, hospitality, revelation, misrecognition, synecdoche and metonymy, moral values uncovered through discovery, intertextuality, to name but a few – all need explaining through a close look at select primary texts).

Learning Objectives:

- How to read: Recognition as a feature of narrative unfolding is at times hard to separate from the relationship between the reader and the text: the reader is the recognizer of meaning in a text and is the observer, both consciously and subconsciously, of the devices that enhance meaning in story-telling.
- That one can read ancient texts and absorb the ideas being conveyed through the same lenses as one can read modern texts if one is made aware of some features of the anatomy of literature; conversely, that there are certain characteristics specific to pre-modern and modern literatures, respectively; and, lying between these two extremes, that some ancient texts display modern features (e.g., the obsession with uncertainty) and some modern texts have a periodic tendency to revive, or play with, ancient forms.
- Students will be encouraged to express their own reading experience in words (oral and written), to some extent colored by the above issues, and to some extent also independent of them, since critical reading must reserve a degree of freedom from any or all received thought.
- Students will learn some of the distinctive and shared characteristics of literary genres (epic; tragedy; scripture; romance; the novel).

Writing Objectives: This course provides a foundation for work in the university by teaching you how to build essays and arguments that reflect an ability to read critically, question evidence, make relevant connections, and present your ideas in coherent, compelling ways. Drawing on primary sources (lectures, essays, novels, films and plays) two 5 page essays are required from student at mid-term and the end of semester.

Weekly short responses will be required for recitation sessions, based on texts and/or movie viewings. Recitation instructors will coordinate these.

Required Texts:

- Aristotle’s The Poetics, trans. Malcolm Heath (Penguin)
• Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*
• Homer, *Odyssey*
• *The Oxford Study Bible* (Genesis, the Gospels of Mark, Luke and John)
• *The Qur’an,* translated by Tarif Khalidi (Suras 12 and 81, with discussion of Sura 2)
• Shakespeare, *King Lear*
• *The Arabian Nights* (Haddawy)
• Kalidasa (Sanskrit classic): *The Recognitions of Shakuntala* (Clay Sanskrit Library edition)
• Voltaire *Candide and Other Stories* Oxford World Classics
• Charles Dickens: *Great Expectations*
• Paul Auster’s *City of Glass*
• Naguib Mahfouz: *The Search*
• Julian Barnes *The Sense of an Ending*
• *The Oxford English Dictionary* located in the Research section of your NYUHome page.

Some Further Optional Texts of related interest (there are many others; pls ask):
• George Eliot: *Daniel Deronda*
• Shakespeare, *Pericles*
• Dickens, *Bleak House*

Standards:
Both required essays must:
• Explore and develop an idea in a coherent, interesting way;
• Have a thoughtful beginning, middle, and end;
• Be grammatically correct; and
• Have a tone appropriate for the intended audience.

A work gives the reader a positive impression of excellence in all listed standards.
B work gives the reader a positive impression of general superiority in all listed standards.
C work is average in each standard.
D or F work is seriously deficient in one or more of the listed standards.

**Major course requirements are as follows:**

1. Class and recitation session attendance and participation. 20%
2. Two 5-page instructor-graded essays. 30% each.
3. Recitation sessions: Keeping of notes in a journal or notebook and writing of response papers per Recitation Instructor directives. 20%

**Reading and Writing Requirements:** You will read often—on average 150 pages per
week, and write short responses about each source you read. When you come to class, please be prepared to discuss reading assignments based on your written notes/responses.

**Film Screenings:** You are required to attend the five film screenings listed on the syllabus (or to arrange your own screening in good time), plus an additional 5 of your choosing from the list. Lucy will lead film screenings and discussions almost every week on an evening to be determined; you are also welcome to watch others from the list on your own. Please keep in mind that each essay you write must use a film as one of your supporting source texts.

Films will be made available in the following ways: 1. Through Netflix and Hulu; 2. On reserve in Avery Fisher; 3. NYU dorm screenings; 4. Group screenings for five mandatory films.

**Portfolio Requirements:** Keep a bound portfolio of your work, including notes and responses, and all drafts of the four formal essays. You will be required to write short responses to all the mandatory films you watch. You’ll hand in your entire portfolio each time an essay’s due, and also at the end of the term. Your portfolio cannot be loose-leaf and must lie flat.

**Essay Due Dates:**
Essay 1 – mid-term (date to be assigned)
Essay 2 end semester (date to be assigne)

**Attendance:** Your work suffers if you do not attend class. You may fail the course if you have 4 absences.

**Participation:** We will sometimes write in class and ask you to read aloud—either from readings or your own responses. It is also crucial to both speak and listen carefully in class sessions. Be prepared to develop a voice, both aloud and on the page—and also allow yourself to learn from other points of view. This skill includes learning how to ask for clarification and to give and receive useful feedback from others—which can be a deceivingly difficult thing to do. **A Few Words About Format and Housekeeping:** Drafts of your essays must be word processed and double-spaced with 1.25 inch margins on the left, 1 inch margins elsewhere, stapled or paper-clipped. Use standard Times Roman type. A Works Cited list is always required.

**Avoid Plagiarism:** You must always identify the source from which you are building your writing and ideas. This doesn’t mean citing things assumed to be general knowledge, but make sure that you always put things in your own words except when you are incorporating and citing evidence. For more on this please seek Assistant Instructor’s advice.

NYUAD, Spring 2017
PART I—CLASSICAL GREEK MATERIALS (poetics, tragedy and epic)

Week 1:

A: Definition of Recognition and Introduction to “Epistemology of Narrative”: cognitive and moral issues of disclosure and recognition in narrative; introductory case study: Carol Reed's The Third Man (1949), to be viewed in a Sunday screening session after first class, with introductory discussion and commentary at end of viewing. How does discovery/recognition unveil a theme or idea in a narrative.

Screening: The Third Man—mandatory movie

B: Aristotle's The Poetics (read chapters 6, 10, 11, and 16 for class)

Week 2:

A: Sophocles' Oedipus the King (read all for class)

Screening: Incendies/Scorched—mandatory movie (suggested and optional: Bladerunner 2049)

B: Scorched and other adaptations of Oedipus

Week 3:

A: Homer's Odyssey Book 8, 16-23

Screening: Mighty Aphroditte (recommended);

B: Homer’s Odyssey continued, with discussion of imposture in literature in historical narrative

PART II—SCRIPTURE

Week 4: Genesis

A: Genesis 1-36
   Abraham and the vision at Mamre; Jacob & picaresque elements of deceit, discovery and transfiguration in biblical narrative.
Suggested movies: *Paris Texas* or *Shutter Island* or *Smoke*

B: *Genesis 37-50:* Judah and Tamar; The Joseph Romance; the transformation of Joseph through the ages

**Week 5: The Qur’an and The Life of Muhammad**

A: Suras 81 (The Overturning) and 12 (Joseph)

B: Recognition and Disclosure in the *Life of Muhammad* (materials to be sent by email attachment)

**Week 6:** The Christian Gospels: readings from Mark, Luke and John

**Sunday Screening:** *Babette’s Feast*—mandatory movie

A: Gospel of Mark (comparanda: Luke and John)

B: Discussion of *Babette’s Feast*

**Week 7:** Dante’s *Inferno*

**Sunday Screening, optional:** *The Lives of Others* or *Volver*

A: Canto XV and T.S. Eliot’s *Little Gidding* (CP)

B: Revision – some discussion of Dante and Islam

**PART III—ROMANCE**

**Sunday Screening:** *Hidden Fortress* or *Lone Star*

A: Kalidasa (The Sanskrit Shakespeare): *The Recognitions of Shakuntala* (read all)

**PART III—ROMANCE**

**Screening:** *Pericles*

A: Shakespeare (recognition in Romance and Tragedy); discussion of *Pericles*
B: *King Lear* (you may choose to view this on line in any of the full productions available but you must have the text available in class)

(start reading *The Arabian Nights* in Haddawy's translation)

**Week 9**

**Sunday Screening: Ran**

A: *The Arabian Nights*: the "Frame Story" and "The Fisherman and the Genie"

B: *The Arabian Nights*: The Three Apples and the Two Viziers

**Week 10:** "Oriental Stories" in the West: reading, romance and the picaresque

**Sunday Screening, suggested: Fiore delle mille e una notte**

A: Voltaire's *Zadig*

B: Short tales from Borges' *Universal History of Infamy* (stories to be sent by attachment)

**PART IV—MODERNITY & POSTMODERNITY**

**Week 11** Charles Dickens: *Great Expectations*

Sunday Screening, suggested but highly recommended: Hitchcock's *Vertigo*

A: Dickens part 1

B: Dickens part 2

**Week 12:**

**Sunday Screening: Robert Altman’s Gosford Park**—mandatory movie

A: *Gosford Park*

B: Paul Auster's *City of Glass* (read all)

**Week 13:** Naguib Mahfouz and the problems of recognition

A: Naguib Mahfouz: *The Search* (read all)
B: Mahfouz continued

Sunday screening: Memento—mandatory movie

Week 14 Memento and other postmodernisms

A: suggested viewing: Moon and/or Matchstick Men

B: The Sense of an Ending by Julian Barnes
   (recommended: read the novel; you may choose to view the movie instead but text must be brought to class)

Final essay due