

Narrative Investigations
K20.1215, Spring 2008
Professor Stacy Pies
Monday and Wednesday, 11:00-12:15 p.m.
715 Broadway, 527

E-mail: stacy.pies@nyu.edu

Office: Gallatin, 715 Broadway, Room 509

Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 12:30-3:00 p.m.; Thursday 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
by appt.

Telephone: 998-9156 (voice); 995-4509 (fax)

Mailbox: Gallatin office, 5th floor

This course serves as an introduction to the concept of narrative. We will be reading literary and philosophical texts that both define and question conventional ideas about fiction, history, and ethical action. We will think about how narrative creates a sense of identity, and consider the relationship writers see, and we ourselves construct, between our stories and our actions. I hope to focus some of our discussion on fields that reflect the interests of members of the class, and in that sense, our course will be formed by collaboration. By familiarizing you with some fundamental works in the history of narrative, this course aims to deepen your ideas about the role of narrative in your lives and your work.

Course Requirements

The work for the class combines class participation, intensive reading, and various types of writing. Class discussion will enable us to make connections between the material we are studying and your areas of interest. As your explorations of narrative progress, please feel free to propose readings and activities and to bring any additional material to the class that you feel might make it more meaningful.

Ground rules: Attendance is required. Habitual lateness and more than two unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade in the course. You are expected to have completed the readings before the class for which they are assigned. Papers are due on deadline.

Texts (required editions; no substitutions please)

Aristotle's Poetics. trans. S.H. Butcher. Introduction by Francis Fergusson. New York: Hill and Wang, 1961.

Cervantes, Miguel de. Don Quixote. trans. Edith Grossman. 1605. New York: Ecco, 2003.

Diderot, Denis. Jacques the Fatalist. trans. Michael Henry. 1796. New York: Vintage/Penguin, 1986.

Forster, E.M. Aspects of the Novel. New York: Harcourt, 1927.

Papers

Requirements: Numerous responses and 3 essays. Writing must be handed in on time. Responses are important for my understanding of what you're thinking about as you read, so it's vital that you hand them in on deadline. They are also sources for your essays.

Specifications: All essays must have a title. When you quote from and cite your sources, you are expected to use the MLA citation format, either parenthetical documentation or footnotes. All essays must include a list of Works Cited following the MLA format. (I'm serious about this, so pay attention!). See MLA Handbook or you can find MLA format on line! Excellent site: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>. Every essay should be typed, double-spaced, and carefully proofread, with pages numbered.

Due Dates

Responses of various kinds (see syllabus for instructions): 2/4, 2/6, 2/20, 3/3, 3/10, 3/24, 4/7, 4/16

Essay #1	2/27
Essay #2	3/31
Essay #3	5/5

Grading

Participation 15%, Responses 35%, Essays 50% (approximate breakdown: #1 15%, #2 15%, #3 20%)

Schedule

1/23 Introductions. In-class writing.

1/28 READING DUE: Plato, excerpt from Republic. Start reading Don Quixote (no kidding).

DISCUSSION: Why is art discussed in the context of education in books 2 and 3? How does the discussion change in Book 10? What effect does art have the emotions? What is the relationship do you think there is between art and the state? Bring in one question or idea to start off discussion.

1/30 READING DUE: Plato, excerpt from Republic and Aristotle, Poetics, Introduction and chapters 1-9. You should be reading Don Quixote, Preface to chapter 9.

DISCUSSION: Bring in passages that show Aristotle's notion of mimesis in contrast to that of Plato. In what different ways does Aristotle justify poetry? What is the difference between Aristotle's notion of catharsis and Plato's idea? What is catharsis, anyway, and what do you think about it?

2/4 READING DUE: Aristotle, Poetics, Chapters 10-26. Forster, Chapters II-V (inclusive). Handout on Narrative. You should be reading Don Quixote, Preface to

chapter 9.

DISCUSSION: Think about the relationship Aristotle sees between plot and human action. Why is plot so important? How does Forster describe the importance and relation of character and plot? What useful things does Forster tell you about story? about time? space? voice? I'll give you a sheet with particular questions, too.

WRITING DUE: RESPONSE #1 2-3 page response discussing Plato's, Aristotle's, and Forster's ideas about the relationship between stories and the way we live our lives

2/6 **READING DUE:** Don Quixote, Part 1, Author's Preface - chapter 3.

DISCUSSION: Look carefully at the Prologue. Who is the author and what is he up to here? What are the main themes that you see introduced in the opening chapters? Choose some passages that illustrate them. What relationship do the author, the narrator, and the reader have? How does Don Quixote become a knight? How do people treat him at the inn? Bring in your questions.

WRITING DUE: RESPONSE #2 Initial response to DQ, prologue-chapter 3. What do you think is important? What does the book make you think about? Which passages do you want to discuss?

2/11 **READING DUE:** Don Quixote, Part 1, chapters 4-15.

DISCUSSION: Bring in passages that you have found important. Look carefully at the movement from chapter 8-chapter 9. What is happening in the transition? We'll discuss the story of Marcela. What do you think about Sancho? Who is Dulcinea?

2/13 **READING DUE:** Don Quixote, Part 1, chapters 16-21.

DISCUSSION: Bring in passages that you have found important. Look at the story of what happens at the inn that DQ takes for a castle, and at the episode with Mambrino's helmet.

2/18 **NO CLASS--Presidents' Day**

2/20 **READING DUE:** Don Quixote, Part 1, chapters 22-32.

DISCUSSION: Bring in passages you have found important. We'll discuss Sancho's story, the galley slaves and Gines de Pasamonte, and Cardenio. Pay special attention to ch. 25. What do you make of it? What do you think about what the story of Cardenio et. al. is saying about love and about women? Think about what interruptions and digressions are saying about literature and life. Think about the relationship of Cardenio's and DQ's notions of honor.

WRITING DUE: RESPONSE #3 Response to ch. 4-21, in which you raise questions and respond to the text. Reflect on some the questions we've raised in class and the role of the interpolated tales.

2/25 READING DUE: Don Quixote, Part 1, chapters 33-38.

DISCUSSION: Look carefully at The Tale of the Man Who Couldn't Keep from Prying. What issues does this tale raise? What emotions does this story explore? What is it suggesting about honor? What connections do you see among the interpolated tales? Pay attention to the discussion about arms and learning.

2/27 READING DUE: Don Quixote, Part 1, chapters 39-43.

DISCUSSION: The Captive's Tale. More on Mambrino's helmet. BRING IN questions and ideas you want to focus on in the Captive's Tale.

WRITING DUE: Essay #1: 5-6 page paper.

3/3 READING DUE: Don Quixote, Part 1, chapters 44-52.

DISCUSSION: The resolution of the Dorotea story. Pay attention to chapters 48, 49 and 50. What is the discussion with the cathedral priest about? What positions about literature are they expounding? Why bring in Leandra? What do you think of the end of part 1?

3/5 Don Quixote, Part 2, Preface - chapter 5.

DISCUSSION: How does Book 2 seem so far? Has Don Quixote changed? What is the relationship between him and Sancho like? Why do you think the story of Sancho's conversation with Teresa is included? What does it show?

3/10 READING DUE: Don Quixote, Part 2, chapters 6-11.

DISCUSSION: Important matters. Why does Samson Carrasco do what he does? What's going on? What do you make of the presence of Book 1 in Book 2?

WRITING DUE: RESPONSE #4 Observations about the relationship of book 1 and book 2.

3/12 READING DUE: Don Quixote, Part 2, chapters 12-17.

DISCUSSION: What about those lions?

3/17 & 3/19 SPRING BREAK Please read ahead to chapter 48

3/24 READING DUE: Don Quixote, Part 2, chapters 18-28.

DISCUSSION: What is going on in the Cave? IS DQ dreaming or? Don Quixote and the puppets. What do you think about his reactions and about the resolution of this incident? What's going on with Sancho's salary? Think about reality, illusion, and literature.

WRITING DUE: RESPONSE #5 Thoughts about your reading and paper thoughts

3/26 READING DUE: Don Quixote, Part 2, chapters 29-41

DISCUSSION: The adventures at the Duke and Duchess's: What do you think about the effect of the Duke and the Duchess on DQ, the character and the text? What do you think this turn of events signifies? Continue thinking about a 5-6 page essay on Quixote.

3/31 READING DUE: Don Quixote, Part 2, chapters 42-58

DISCUSSION: Sancho's governorship and other matters. Why are DQ and Sancho separated? How does their awareness evolve? What do you make of Sancho's adventure in the pit? Are Sancho and DQ changing? Is their relationship changing? (This is an open question; I don't have a specific answer that I'm looking for). Follow out themes you've been thinking about.

WRITING DUE: Essay #2 (5-6 pages)

4/2 READING DUE: Don Quixote, Part 2, chapters 59-64

DISCUSSION: How does Don Quixote change? Ricote, the bandits, the roles we play, resolutions in stories vs. in life.

4/7 READING DUE: Don Quixote, Part 2, chapters 65-74.

DISCUSSION: The end. . . . Where does all this leave you?

WRITING DUE: RESPONSE #6

4/9 Concluding discussion of Don Quixote

4/14 READING DUE: Jacques the Fatalist, pp. 21-105.

DISCUSSION: Bring in your questions and observations. Possible ideas: the relation of history and fiction, the book's notion of morality, the role of one of the interpolated tales.

4/16 READING DUE: Jacques the Fatalist, pp. 106-153 and "In Praise of Richardson"

DISCUSSION: Mme. de la Pommeraye. Why is this tale included? What are the formal and moral implications?

WRITING DUE: RESPONSE #7 Reactions to Jacques. What connections do you see, if any, between Diderot's "novel" and Cervantes's "novel"?

4/21 READING DUE: Jacques the Fatalist, pp. 153-end

4/23 READING DUE: Text TBD (Calvino? Kundera?)

4/28 READING DUE: Literary text TBD

4/30 READING DUE: Literary text TBD

5/5 Student Readings

WRITING DUE: Final essay.