

## NYU Prague

**COLIT-UA 9136P01, SASEM-UG9401P01**

**Kafka and His Contexts**

**Spring 22**

**Course Format: Blended**

**Time Zone: CET**

### **Spring 22**

You may be taking courses at multiple locations this semester. If you are enrolled in this course 100% **remotely** please make sure that you have completed the online academic orientation via Brightspace so you are aware of site specific support structure, policies and procedures. **Please contact the site Academic Director ([vanda.thorne@nyu.edu](mailto:vanda.thorne@nyu.edu)) if you need more assistance.**

If you are attending **in person**, you will be assigned a seat on the first day and are expected to use that seat for the entire semester due to NYU COVID-19 safety protocol. Please note that you are expected to attend every class meeting in-person; however, this may change at any point during the semester if local COVID-19 regulations require additional physical distancing.

### **Instructor Information**

- Name: Mgr. Richard Müller, Ph.D.
- Email: [rm168@nyu.edu](mailto:rm168@nyu.edu)
- Office hours: After class, and by arrangement via email
- Cell phone: **+420 732 436 5410**

### **Course Information**

- TBA

### **Course Overview and Goals**

The course is focused on exploring Franz Kafka's work – stories, novels, diaries and letters – in the context of modernism/modernity and its self-reflection. We will situate Kafka's work in the broader context of the turn-of-the century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century multinational and multiethnic Prague culture, literature and society, and in light of several important transformations. These will include the tension between aestheticism and functionalism (such

as the elimination of ornament in the thinking of Adolf Loos), the birth of metropolitan consciousness (in the view of Georg Simmel's sociological approach), the development of psychoanalysis (Sigmund Freud) and psychological philosophy (Franz Brentano), the crisis of spirituality (Friedrich Nietzsche), and the emergence of the new technical media such as the film and phonography. We will learn to use the elementary concepts of the study of literature, but also try to apply parallel theoretical frameworks (posthumanism, media theory). These will help us understand Kafka's writing and vice versa – his work might suggest necessary re-conceptualizations. In addition, we will discuss various later adaptations and artistic interpretations of Kafka's work (Borges, Welles, Kundera, Švankmajer, Yamamura). These confrontations will make several key topics emerge: the metropolis and consciousness, family, estrangement, communication, time, writing and media, traveling, territories and identities, languages, animals, art, and pain. We will take special notice of the way these phenomena are represented in and through the medium of literary fiction.

## **Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:**

- Understand Kafka's unique literary gesture and his position in the context of modernity and modernism, and his current relevance.
- Know and apply the fundamental concepts of literary analysis and interpretation and the relevant methods of the contextual reading of literature.
- Know and apply the relevant methods of confronting the spheres of literature and philosophy/theory/the arts/other media, and extract the potential intellectual purchase from such confrontations.

## **Course Requirements**

### **Class Participation**

Active class participation is necessary for this type of course; it constitutes **20%** of your grade. You will be expected to read the assigned texts, to come prepared to class and participate in discussion.

### **Response Papers**

There will be three home-written response papers (700 words, 5 points each); **15%** of the grade.

### **Mid-Term Written Test**

Written in-class interpretations; you will be expected to be able to use the discussed theoretical concepts; reading materials can be used; **20%**.

### **Critical Responses**

Two 10-15 minutes critical responses given at different classes and based on required reading and some additional materials providing further framework, usually between 20 to 30 pages; **20%**.

### **Final Exam**

Home-written paper on a topic of your choice or a suggested topic (1,400 words) followed by an in-class oral exam based on your paper and additional questions exploring your conceptual understanding of the material; **25%**.

## Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

Assignments/Activities	% of Final Grade
Class Participation	20
Response Papers	15
Critical Responses	20
Mid-term Written Exam	20
Final Exam	25

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Percent
<b>A</b>	96% and higher
<b>A-</b>	90 - 95.99%
<b>B+</b>	86% - 89.99%
<b>B</b>	83% - 85.99%
<b>B-</b>	80% - 82.99%
<b>C+</b>	76% - 79.99%
<b>C</b>	73% - 75.99%
<b>C-</b>	70% - 72.99%
<b>D+</b>	67% - 69.99%
<b>D</b>	63% - 66.99%
<b>D-</b>	60% - 62.99%
<b>F</b>	59.99% and lower

### Assessment Expectations

**Grade A:** Excellent work demonstrating a critical and creative approach to the subject, clear understanding of the explored critical concepts and an ability to express thoughts cogently and persuasively both in class and in written form.

**Grade B:** Very good work that demonstrates most, but not all of the criteria mentioned above.

**Grade C:** Good work that demonstrates only some of the criteria mentioned above.

**Grade D:** Passable work.

**Grade F:** Failure to achieve a passable standard.

# Course Schedule

## Topics and Assignments

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Session 1 Tuesday, January 25	Course overview		
Session 2 Thursday, January 27	Kafka's Early Texts	Franz Kafka, <i>Contemplation</i> (1912) [selection 1, Reader, 10pp] <i>Narratee</i> [Brightspace, 2 files, 1p each]	
Session 3 Tuesday, February 1	Modern Metropolis	Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) [Reader, pp. 17–25, 9pp] Franz Kafka, <i>Contemplation</i> (1912) [selection 2, Brightspace, 2pp] Charles Baudelaire, "To a Passer-By" (1857) [Brightspace, 1p]	<u>Response Paper 1 due Thursday morning</u>
Session 4 Thursday, February 3	Meaning and Interpretation	Umberto Eco, "Introduction" to <i>The Limits of Interpretation</i> (1990) [Brightspace, 6pp] Jonathan Culler, "Language, Meaning, and Interpretation" (1997) [Brightspace, 14pp]	
Session 5 Tuesday, February 8	Kafka's Trial (1)	Franz Kafka, <i>The Trial</i> (1925), chapters 1–3 [pp. 1–73 = 74pp] <i>Free Indirect Discourse</i> [Brightspace, 3pp]	
Session 6 Thursday, February 10	Kafka's Trial (2)	Franz Kafka, <i>The Trial</i> (1925), chapters 4–6 [pp. 74–106 = 33pp] <i>Time in Narrative</i> [Brightspace, 3pp]	
Session 7 Tuesday, February 15	Kafka's Trial (3)	Franz Kafka, <i>The Trial</i> (1925), chapters 7–10 [pp. 107–211 = 105pp] Walter Benjamin, "Franz Kafka" (1933–34) [excerpt, Brightspace, 3pp]	
Session 8 Thursday, February 17	After God	Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Gay Science", aphorisms 109, 125, 343 (1882) [Brightspace, 4pp] Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, Ippolit's letter from <i>The Idiot</i> [Brightspace, 26pp]	
Session 9 Tuesday, February 22	Writing and Fragment	Franz Kafka, <i>Diaries</i> (1910–1923) [selection, ca 5pp] Max Brod, Postscript to the first edition of <i>The Trial</i> (1925)	

		[Brightspace, 7pp]	
Session 10, Thursday February 24	Against Ornament	Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime" (1908) [Reader, pp. 11–15 = 5pp] Mark Anderson, "Introduction: Decadence and the Crisis of Ornament" (1992) [Brightspace, 18pp] Richard T. Gray et al, "Metaphor" (2005) [Brightspace, 3pp]	<i>Framework 1: Anti-Ornament [materials provided by professor, ca 15pp]</i>
Session 11, Tuesday, March 1	Kafka and Family (1)	Franz Kafka, "The Judgment" (1912) [Reader, pp. 175–189 = 25pp]	<u>Response Paper 2 due Thursday</u>
Session 12 Thursday, March 3	Kafka and Family (2)	Franz Kafka, "The Cares of a Family Man" (1914–1917) [Reader, pp. 191–192 = 2pp] Franz Kafka, "A Crossbreed" (1917) [Brightspace, 2pp]	
Session 13 Tuesday, March 8	Letters (1)	Franz Kafka, "Letter to the Father" (1919) [Reader, pp. 193–235 = 43pp] Gilles Deleuze – Félix Guattari, "An Exaggerated Oedipus" (1975) [Brightspace, 7pp]	<i>Framework 2: Against psychoanalysis [materials provided by professor, ca 20pp]</i>
Session 14 Thursday, March 10	<b><u>MIDTERM WRITTEN EXAM</u></b>		
Tuesday, March 15	<b>SPRING BREAK - NO CLASSES</b>		
Thursday, March 17	<b>SPRING BREAK - NO CLASSES</b>		
Session 15 Tuesday, March 22	Kafka's Prague (1) - Fieldtrip	A commented walk around Staré město and the places associated with Kafka, visit to Kafka's Library. Meet in the classroom. Equivalent activity for online participants.	
Session 16 Thursday, March 24	New Media	"First International Airplanes Competition in Brescia" (1909) [silent film, Brightspace, 12:50] "A Ride Through Prague in an Open Tram" (1908) [silent film, Brightspace, 1:56] "Nick Winter and the Theft of the Mona Lisa" (1911) [silent film, Brightspace, 9:26] Franz Kafka, "The Aeroplanes in Brescia" (1909) [Brightspace, 7pp] John Zilcosky, "Boundless	

		Entertainment?" (2003) [Brightspace, 5pp]	
Session 17 Tuesday, March 29	Letters (2)	Franz Kafka, <i>Letters to Felice</i> , selection (1912–1917) [Reader, pp. 337–357 = 21pp]	<i>Framework 3:</i> <i>Gramophone,</i> <i>Film, Typewriter</i> <i>[materials</i> <i>provided by</i> <i>professor, ca</i> <i>30pp]</i>
Session 18 Thursday, March 31	Home	Franz Kafka, "The Metamorphosis" (1915) [Reader, pp. 400–425 = 26pp]	
Session 19 Tuesday, April 5	Animals	Franz Kafka, "A Report to an Academy" (1920) [Brightspace, 9pp]	<i>Framework 4:</i> <i>Posthumanism,</i> <i>[materials</i> <i>provided by</i> <i>professor, 20pp]</i>
Session 20 Thursday, April 7	Kafka's Prague (2) - Fieldtrip	Fieldtrip (related art exhibition or visit to the Archive of National Letters). Equivalent activity for online participants.	<u>Response Paper 3</u> <u>due Monday</u>
Session 21 Tuesday, April 12	Pain	Franz Kafka, "In the Penal Colony" (1919) [Reader, pp. 428–451 = 24pp]	<i>Framework 5:</i> <i>Sadomasochism</i> <i>[materials</i> <i>suggested by</i> <i>professor, ca</i> <i>17pp]</i>
Session 22 Thursday, April 14	Adapting Kafka (1)	Franz Kafka, "A Country Doctor" (1916–1917) [Brightspace, 7pp]	
Session 23 Tuesday April 19	Adapting Kafka (2)	"Kafka's Country Doctor" (2007) [short film, dir. by Koji Yamamura, Brightspace, 20:36]	<i>Framework 6:</i> <i>Between Media</i> <i>[materials</i> <i>provided by</i> <i>professor, ca</i> <i>15pp]</i>
Session 24 Thursday, April 21	Kafka's Contemporary	Jaroslav Hašek, <i>The Good Soldier</i> <i>Švejk</i> , chapters 1–5 (1921–1923) [Reader, pp. 464–502 = 39pp] Karel Kosík, "Hašek and Kafka" (1963) [Brightspace, 6pp]	
Session 25 Tuesday, April 26	Kafka's Contemporary		<i>Framework 7:</i> <i>The Grotesque</i>
Session 26 Thursday, April 28	After Kafka: Borges	Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths" (1941), [Brightspace, 10pp], "Kafka and His Precursors" (1951) [Brightspace, 3pp]	<i>Framework 8:</i> <i>Borges [materials</i> <i>suggested by</i> <i>professor, ca</i> <i>18pp]</i>

Session 27 Tuesday, May 3	After Kafka: Švankmajer	Screening: Jan Švankmajer's short films, selection	
Session 28 Thursday, May 5	<b>LAST DAY OF CLASSES</b>	In-Class Consultations	<b><u>Final Essay (1,400 words) due 10 May</u></b>
<b>Reading Day</b> Tuesday, May 10	<b>NO CLASSES</b>		
Session 29 Thursday, May 12	<b>FINAL EXAMS</b>	<b><u>Final Exam</u></b>	

## Course Materials

### Required Textbooks & Materials:

- *Reader: Kafka and His Contexts*. Assembled by Richard Müller. New York University 2012. **The reader and all other required materials are available at Brightspace.**
- Franz Kafka: *The Trial*. Transl. by Willa Muir, Edwin Muir. London : Vintage Books 2005. ISBN 978-0-099-42864-0

### Additional Literature (copies available in NYU P Library)

- Anderson, Mark (ed.): *Reading Kafka. Prague, Politics, and the Fin de Siècle*. New York : Schocken Books 1989.
- Anderson, Mark: *Kafka's Clothes: Ornament and Aestheticism in the Habsburg fin de siècle*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992.
- Benjamin, Walter: "Franz Kafka". In idem: *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books 2007.
- Brod, Max: *Franz Kafka: A Biography*. New York: Schocken Books 1947.
- Corngold, Stanley – Gross, Ruth V. (eds.): *Kafka for the Twenty-First Century*. Rochester, NY: Camden House 2011.
- Deleuze, Gilles – Guattari, Félix: *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1986.
- Gray, Richard T., Gross, Ruth V., et al.: *A Franz Kafka Encyclopedia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 2005.
- Robertson, Ritchie: *Kafka: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004.
- Rolleston, James (ed.): *A Companion to the Works of Franz Kafka*. Rochester: Camden House 2002.
- Stach, Reiner: *Kafka: The Decisive Years*. Orlando: Harcourt 2005.
- Stach, Reiner: *Is that Kafka? 99 Finds*. New York: New Directions Books 2016.
- Steiner, Peter: *The Deserts of Bohemia. Czech Fiction and its Social Context*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2000.
- Wagenbach, Klaus: *Franz Kafka*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2003
- Zilcosky, John: *Kafka's Travels. Exoticism, Colonialism and the Traffic of Writing*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan 2003.

### Resources:

- **Access your course materials:** [Brightspace](#)
- **Databases, journal articles, and more:** [Bobst Library](#) (library.nyu.edu)

- **Assistance with strengthening your writing:** [NYU Writing Center](https://nyu.mywconline.com) (nyu.mywconline.com)
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance:** [IT Help Desk](https://nyu.edu/it/servicedesk) (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)
- **NYU Prague library:** [Tritius Catalog](https://nyu.tritius.cz/?lang=EN) (https://nyu.tritius.cz/?lang=EN)

## Course Policies

### Attendance and Tardiness

Studying at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers, or online through NYU Brightspaces if the course is remote synchronous/blended, is expected promptly when class begins. Attendance will be checked at each class meeting. If you have scheduled a remote course immediately preceding/following an in-person class, you may want to write to Academic Director Vanda Thorne ([vt21@nyu.edu](mailto:vt21@nyu.edu)) to see if you can take your remote class at the Academic Center.

As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor and/or the Academic Director Vanda Thorne ([vt21@nyu.edu](mailto:vt21@nyu.edu)) by email immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). **Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, Moses Center accommodations, religious observance or emergencies.** Your professor or site staff may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from an NYU Staff member as proof. Emergencies or other exceptional circumstances that you wish to be treated confidentially must be presented to staff. Doctor's notes must be submitted in person or by e-mail to the Academic Director, who will inform your professors.

Unexcused absences may be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed, and may negatively affect your class participation grade. Four unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points for frequently joining the class late.

Exams, tests and quizzes, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation. It is the student's responsibility to produce this doctor's note and submit it to site staff; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F and no make-up assessment is scheduled. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class.

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to catch up with the work that was missed.

### Late Submission of Work

1. Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late (including weekends and public holidays), unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor's note or by approval of NYU SITE Staff), in which case the 2 points per day deductions start counting from the day the extended deadline has passed.
2. Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 days (including weekends and public holidays) following the submission date receives an F.

3. Assignments due during finals week that are submitted more than 3 days late (including weekends and public holidays) without previously arranged extensions will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Any exceptions or extensions for work during finals week must be discussed with the Site Director.
4. Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.
5. Please remember that university computers do not keep your essays - you must save them elsewhere. Having lost parts of your essay on the university computer is no excuse for a late submission.

## Final Exams

Final exams must be taken at their designated times. Should there be a conflict between final exams, please bring it to the attention of the site Academic Director as soon as this is known to facilitate alternate arrangements. Final exams may not be taken early, and students should not plan to leave the site before the end of the finals period.

## Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

According to the Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook, plagiarism is defined as follows:

**Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as though it were one's own. More specifically plagiarism is to present as one's own a sequence of words quoted without quotation marks from another writer, a paraphrased passage from another writer's work; facts or ideas gathered, organized and reported by someone else, orally and/or in writing. Since plagiarism is a matter of fact, not of the student's intention, it is crucial that acknowledgment of the sources be accurate and complete. Even where there is no conscious intention to deceive, the failure to make appropriate acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism.**

The College of Arts and Science's Academic Handbook defines plagiarism similarly and also specifies the following:

**“presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written), writing a paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else's idea without a reference to the source of the idea, or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both teachers have given their permission in advance).**

**Receiving help on a take-home examination or quiz is also cheating – and so is giving that help – unless expressly permitted by the teacher (as in collaborative projects).**

**While all this looks like a lot to remember, all you need to do is give credit where it is due, take credit only for original ideas, and ask your teacher or advisor when in doubt.”**

**“Penalties for plagiarism range from failure for a paper, failure for the course or dismissal from the university.” (Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook)**

## Classroom Etiquette

- Please be mindful of your microphone and video display during synchronous class meetings. Ambient noise and some visual images may disrupt class time for you and your peers.
- If you are not using your cell phone to follow the lesson, cell phones should be turned off or in silent mode during class time.
- Make sure to let your classmates finish speaking before you do.

- Please do not eat during class and minimize any other distracting noises (e.g. rustling of papers and leaving the classroom before the break, unless absolutely necessary)
- If deemed necessary by the study away site (ie COVID related need), synchronous class sessions may be recorded and archived for other students to view. This will be announced at the beginning of class time.
- Students should be respectful and courteous at all times to all participants in class. In online classes, consider using the chat function or “raise hand” function in order to add your voice to class discussions.

### **Inclusivity Policies and Priorities**

NYU's Office of Global Programs and NYU's global sites are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. In order to nurture a more inclusive global university, NYU affirms the value of sharing differing perspectives and encourages open dialogue through a variety of pedagogical approaches. Our goal is to make all students feel included and welcome in all aspects of academic life, including our syllabi, classrooms, and educational activities/spaces.

### **Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays**

Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their lecturer AND NYU SITE's Academics Office in writing via email one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also [University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#)

### **Pronouns and Name Pronunciation (Albert and Zoom)**

Students, staff, and faculty have the opportunity to add their pronouns, as well as the pronunciation of their names, into Albert. Students can have this information displayed to faculty, advisors, and administrators in Albert, Brightspace, the NYU Home internal directory, as well as other NYU systems. Students can also opt out of having their pronouns viewed by their instructors, in case they feel more comfortable sharing their pronouns outside of the classroom. For more information on how to change this information for your Albert account, please see the [Pronouns and Name Pronunciation website](#).

Students, staff, and faculty are also encouraged, though not required, to list their pronouns, and update their names in the name display for Zoom. For more information on how to make this change, please see the [Personalizing Zoom Display Names website](#).

### **Moses Accommodations Statement**

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented and registered disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (+1 212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Accommodations for this course are managed through NYU Prague.

## **Bias Response**

The New York University Bias Response Line provides a mechanism through which members of our community can share or report experiences and concerns of bias, discrimination, or harassing behavior that may occur within our community.

Experienced administrators in the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) receive and assess reports, and then help facilitate responses, which may include referral to another University school or unit, or investigation if warranted according to the University's existing Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.

The Bias Response Line is designed to enable the University to provide an open forum that helps to ensure that our community is equitable and inclusive.

To report an incident, you may do so in one of three ways:

- Online using the [Web Form \(link\)](#)
- Email: [bias.response@nyu.edu](mailto:bias.response@nyu.edu)
- Phone: 212-998-2277