NYU GALLATIN SCHOOL OF INDIVIDUALIZED STUDY
THE CHAINS OF COMMAND: AUTHORITY AND OBEDIENCE

FIRST-UG91
Fall 2014
M/W 2:00-3:15
GCASL/238 Thompson St., Room 379

Professor Andrea Gadberry
Email: <andrea.gadberry@nyu.edu>
Office: 1 Washington Pl., Room 606 (through late October), Room 614 (thereafter)
Office Hours: M 3:30-6:00, W 3:30-5:00, by appointment (http://goo.gl/W2Fhpm)

Course Description

What do we really mean when we talk about “authority,” and why do we obey it? This semester we will examine the decision to obey or disobey and the pleasures and agonies that come with following the rules and with breaking them. Across a range of literary, philosophical, political theoretical, and psychoanalytic texts, we will examine the authority figures behind the rules, those who decide to follow them (or not), and the bystanders around them. We will ask how different disciplines grapple with the challenge of authority and obedience—for instance, how political theory imagines the “sovereign,” how literature erects archetypes of temptation, and how psychoanalysis imagines the prohibitions we carry within ourselves. We will also track these tropes and figures through history, asking how the rules, the rulers, and the ruled change over time (and how and why they might). How do our ideas about what constitutes obedience and disobedience shift? When we enter into a relationship (or a culture!) with foundational rules and preconditions, how does this enable, diminish or, some might suggest, even destroy our freedom? And what happens when the promises we’ve made conflict with each other and make it impossible to obey one command without disobeying another? Our readings will include, in addition to earlier and later works, Immanuel Kant’s “What is Enlightenment?,” Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s The Social Contract, Charles Perrault’s “Bluebeard,” Mary Wollstonecraft’s The Wrongs of Woman, Søren Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling, and Sigmund Freud’s Totem and Taboo.

This course is open to Gallatin first-year students only.

Course Objectives/Learning Goals

• Exposure to a range of disciplinary approaches, grounded in comparative literary study
• Depth of knowledge of key Enlightenment and early modern texts and their contemporary relevance
• Training in close reading and analysis of literary, philosophical, political theoretical, and psychoanalytic texts.
• Training in writing skills, especially argumentation through close reading
REQUIRED TEXTS

All of the required materials are available at the NYU Bookstore, and they are also widely available at local bookstores and online. Wherever you buy your books, please make sure that you get the texts we’re reading in translation (marked with an asterisk*) in the exact editions listed below.

Please note that there are both required books and a course reader.

Books


Course Pack

The required course reader is only available at the NYU Bookstore and is listed as follows:
First UG.91 Gadberry Coursepack, ISBN: 978200008034B.

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS

All courses in Gallatin require a weekly minimum of eight to nine hours of work outside of class sessions, with additional hours when major assignments are due. In this class, weekly reading and writing assignments will account for most of the required assignments, and there will also be required papers and a presentation.

Weekly Readings

Each week, you will be assigned readings from the list of required course books or the course pack. Weekly readings average to approximately seventy pages per week, but do not be deceived on weeks when the readings seem to be shorter! Some of the shorter assignments come from very dense texts or challenging verse forms that will take as long for you to read (and you may often need to reread them!) as longer assignments.

Always bring the assigned text for the class session to class.

Weekly Posts, NYU Classes

Each week, you will post short reflections (200-300 words) on the assigned reading for that week to be posted by 6:00 pm on Sunday night. The purpose of the weekly posts is four-fold: first, to encourage you to work with the reading actively, not simply reading the text once over but also
engaging critically with the work in written form; second, to encourage creative interpretations of the text in a formal forum free from the pressures of conventional grading (the posts will count toward the final grade but only cumulatively); third, to foster class participation by extending the conversation outside of the classroom to electronic fora and by helping you prepare some thoughts on the reading simply by completing the weekly assignment (hint: you can bring up what you talk about your post in class discussion!); four, to give you more practice writing and doing close reading leading up to the formal paper assignments.

Papers

The formal papers are designed to introduce you to close reading and argumentation and to give you practice formulating your own topics over a sequence of progressively longer and less restrictive assignments. Only the Final Paper has a formal proposal requirement, but I strongly encourage you to attend office hours to discuss paper topics throughout the semester. For each assignment, I will give you more detailed guidelines and, for the first three papers, I will provide prompts. You will come up with your own topics for the final paper; however, you are also more than welcome to come up with your own paper topic for all of the papers, but please come to office hours to check in with me if you decide to do so!

All papers and proposals are due in paper and electronic copy by noon on the due date listed on the syllabus. You can leave the paper copy in my mailbox on the sixth floor, and you can upload the electronic copy as .docx or .pdf to NYU Classes under “Assignments.”

1. Short Papers 1 and 2 (2-3 pages, 600-900 words each)

The short papers are designed to give you practice working closely with a single text. Each short paper will focus on a relatively narrow aspect of a single text (e.g., a trope, a character, a scene) and will develop and sustain an argument rooted in close reading of the text.

2. Comparative Paper (5-6 pages, 1500-1800 words)

The first of your two longer papers will be a comparative paper bringing together two course texts. Working over a broader argumentative frame, you will pursue a more complicated argument and engage different texts and disciplines in dialogue.

3. Final Paper (7-8 pages, 2100-2400 words)

The final paper will be developed in both formal and informal consultation with the instructor and can take the form either of an essay focused on a single text or a broader comparative essay. You will be required to submit a formal proposal due in early December.

Leading Class Discussion

Over the course of the semester, you will practice formulating questions around the course topic and around the course texts as you take the “lead” role in guiding class discussion for the first third or so of class on a given day. Students will give a short presentation about the questions the day’s
text(s) prompted and then take an active role in moderating the subsequent discussion. I intend this assignment to serve two main purposes: first, to give you practice speaking in class in a slightly more formal register and second, to let you shape the questions informing our inquiry and defining our classroom.

OTHER COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

This is a small seminar, and our discussion will be the most interesting and effective (not to mention pleasurable!) when everyone participates actively. This means that you should come to class ready to participate in conversation whether it be in small group activities or larger class discussions. The most reliable way to feel ready for discussion is to come to class not only having read the text(s) assigned for that day but also having thought of specific questions the text raises for you or particular insights or observations the text inspires. Write down these ideas in your books or course pack. Take note of specific passages in the works we read that strike you as unusual or puzzling, and draw the attention of your classmates to those moments of the text. (And if these tips don’t help, come talk to me during office hours for some more suggestions!)

Regular attendance is a requirement for this course. Up to three unexcused absences are allowed, but each additional absence will lower your participation grade by a full letter. Students who miss more than six class sessions (that is, three weeks of class) will not be able to receive a passing grade. (Please note: chronic lateness will count as at least one absence.)

LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND EXTENSIONS

Late papers will drop by one grade for each day they are late (i.e., from a B to a C). That said, I am willing to give reasonable extensions without penalty if you arrange the extension ahead of time. No extensions will be granted with less than 48-hours notice.

ELECTRONICS POLICY

Please turn off and put away all electronics for the duration of each class session.

OFFICE HOURS

I hold office hours weekly on Monday from 3:30 to 6:00 and on Wednesday from 3:30 to 5:00. To reserve a spot, schedule an appointment on the google calendar, available at http://goo.gl/W2Fhpm. Please feel free to check in casually before class starts or as we walk out of class. I encourage you to come by my office hours to introduce yourself in the first weeks of class, to talk about your evolving ideas about the course material, and to brainstorm for your papers throughout the semester.
Grading Formula

NYU Classes Posts: 10%
Short Paper 1: 10%
Short Paper 2: 15%
Comparative Paper: 20%
Final Paper: 25%
Participation (includes contributions to discussions, leading class discussion, general preparedness, and attendance): 20%

Major Deadlines

NYU Classes Weekly, 6:00 pm on Sunday
Short Paper 1 F 19 September
Short Paper 2 F 10 October
Comparative Paper F 14 November
Final Paper Proposal Tu 2 December
Final Paper W 17 December

Academic Integrity

This course demands that you uphold the standards of academic integrity to which Gallatin and the university adhere. This means that absolutely no instances of academic dishonesty or plagiarism will be tolerated. It’s your responsibility to understand what plagiarism consists of, and you should know you will still be held to these standards of integrity even if you plagiarize accidentally. When in doubt, cite your sources and ask your instructors!

The official policy of the Gallatin School with respect to academic integrity applies in full to this course:

“As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html)”
I. Is it useless to obey?  
Part 1: Forbidden Fruit

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<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>W 3 September</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
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| Week 2 | M 8 September | Book of Genesis 6-9, 15-22 [CP 1-57]  
Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words) |
| Week 3 | M 15 September | Milton, cont., Book 9 [CP 109-124]  
Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words) |
|        | W 17 September | Charles Perrault, “Bluebeard” [CP 59-71] and Vladimir Propp,  
Selections from *Morphology of the Folktale* [CP 73-91] |
|        | F 19 September | Short Paper 1 (2-3 pages, 600-900 words) |
“Taboo and Emotional Ambivalence,” pp. 24-52  
Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words) |

II. Sovereign Rule(s)

Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words) |
|        | W 1 October | Hobbes, cont., Selections from Part II, pp.106-218  
Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words) |
Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words) |
|        | W 8 October | Rousseau, cont., Books III and IV, pp. 101-188  
Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words) |
|        | F 10 October | Short Paper 2 (2-3 pages, 600-900 words) |
| Week 7 | M 13 October | No Class, Fall Break |
|        | W 15 October | Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” [CP 125-130]  
Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words) |
| Week 8 | M 20 October | Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 1-54  
Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words) |
|        | W 22 October | Kierkegaard, cont., pp. 54-81  
Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words) |
| Week 9 | M 27 October | Kierkegaard, cont., pp. 81-124  
Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words) |
|        | W 29 October | Kierkegaard, cont., wrap-up  
Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words) |
|        |        | + In-Class Registration Workshop (2:30-3:15 with Class Advisor  
Yevgeniya Traps) |
III. Disobedience: Transgression and Critique, Civil and Otherwise

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<tr>
<th>Week 10</th>
<th>M 3 November</th>
<th>Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” [CP 131-139] + Mikhail Bakunin, “Critique of Rousseau’s Theory of the State” [CP 143-165]</th>
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<td>W 5 November</td>
<td>Foucault + Bakunin, cont. + Edgar Allan Poe, “The Imp of the Perverse” [CP 167-175]</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>M 10 November</td>
<td>Sophocles, Antigone, lines 1-625 (pp. 21-44)</td>
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<td>W 12 November</td>
<td>Sophocles, cont., lines 626-end, pp. 44-69</td>
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<td>F 14 November</td>
<td>Comparative Paper (5-6 pages, 1500-1800 words)</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>M 17 November</td>
<td>Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria: or The Wrongs of Woman, pp. 57-105</td>
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<td>W 19 November</td>
<td>Wollstonecraft, cont., pp. 107-148</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>M 24 November</td>
<td>Mary Wollstonecraft, “Vindication of the Rights of Woman” [CP 177-204]</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>M 1 December</td>
<td>Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (32 pages)</td>
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<td>Tu 2 December</td>
<td>Final Paper Proposal Due</td>
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IV. Is it useless to obey?

Part 2: Conclusions and The Way We Live Now

|         |              | Weekly Post, NYU Classes (300 words)                                                                                           |
|         | W 10 December | Last Day, Conclusions and Wrap Up                                                                                             |
|         |              | Contemporary Readings TBD [pdf, roughly 45 pages]                                                                                |
|         | W 17 December | Synthesizing Post, NYU Classes (600 words)                                                                                     |
|         | W 17 December | Final Paper (7-8 pages, 2100-2400 words)                                                                                      |