

## PH107 Problems in Philosophy and Literature

### Essay Questions

Essays are due by 12 noon on Thursday of Week 1 in Term 2, through Tabula, the Philosophy electronic submission system. Instructions and the submission portal are available from our module page and from the following page on the Philosophy Department website:  
[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/undergraduate/current\\_students/esubmission](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/undergraduate/current_students/esubmission)

Essays should be word-processed, 2500 words in length (give or take 10%, not counting bibliographic information). We will schedule 10-minute meetings, to talk with each of you individually about your ideas for the essay, in week 10 of term 1.

The goal of the essay is to develop a clear, well-supported response to one of the following questions. You should draw in a precise and reflective way on the relevant reading(s) from the class. There is helpful advice on writing essays on the Philosophy Department website:  
[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/undergraduate/current\\_students/advice/essays](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/undergraduate/current_students/advice/essays)

1. What does the narrative surrounding Elizabeth Costello's lectures—the story of her visit to give these lectures—add to Coetzee's work in *The Lives of Animals*? Articulate and discuss an issue that the narrative framing of the lectures helps you to address.
2. 'If principles are what you want to take away from this talk, I would have to respond, open your heart and listen to what your heart says' (37). What does Elizabeth Costello's appeal to 'the heart' ask of us? Is her appeal in conflict with an appeal to ethical principle?
3. Coetzee's work refers to many real and fictional engagements with animals, from the domains of literature, science, and philosophy. Why do humans need to attend to the lives of animals?
4. Aristotle, in the *Poetics* 6, makes the evocation of pity and fear essential to tragedy. Discuss the importance of emotion in one or two of the literary works we have studied. Can we learn anything from a work's evocation of emotion?
5. O'Connor stated that the title of 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' was borrowed from Teilhard De Chardin and his theory of the Omega Point – everything moves upwards towards love. Discuss Chardin's statement in relation to O'Connor's application of it.
6. O'Connor called The Misfit in 'A Good Man is Hard to Find' a 'prophet gone wrong'. Discuss.
7. The title of O'Connor's 'A Temple of the Holy Ghost' refers to the Catholic belief that one's body belongs to God. How does this idea manifest in relation to the girl's body, the body of the performer at the fair, and the Host at Benediction?
8. To what extent are O'Connor's stories about the relationship between mystery and revelation?
9. Claim: Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is in sympathy with *both* Kant and Bourdieu on beauty. Explain the plausibility of this claim, and how you understand the relation of the novel to their views.
10. Consider how some or all elements of Kant's analysis of the judgement of taste are relevant to the aesthetic lives of characters in *The Bluest Eye*. Is his analysis helpful in understanding what they struggle with?

11. Is human beauty an aesthetic or an ethical matter? Address with reference at least to *The Bluest Eye* (you may bring in other readings as well).
12. 'Beauty was not simply something to behold; it was something one could *do*' (Morrison's Afterword to *The Bluest Eye*). What could this mean? Is her novel hopeful about our capacity to 'do beauty'?
13. Iris Murdoch says that we have 'to be disciplined enough to see as much reality in the work as the artist has succeeded in putting into it' (63). What does fiction have to do with discipline and reality? Discuss her claim in relation to one or more of the works of fiction we have studied.
14. To what extent is 'The Brothers' a defence of the bonds of humanity and community?
15. What role does the landscape play in Wordsworth's discussion of grief in 'The Brothers'?
16. 'The Brothers' is a dramatic pastoral based on dialogue, and yet the feeling developed in its narrative is arguably more important than its plot. Discuss.
17. What does it mean to 'dwell' 'poetically' in Heidegger's reading?
18. For Heidegger, poetry names but does not describe: why is this important to him?
19. Heidegger argues that, as the projection of truth, all art is poetry. Discuss.
20. Choose one of the following themes: freedom, loneliness, privilege, age, faith, home. Compare how that theme is embodied and engaged with in two or more works we have read, by different writers. What kinds of thinking and learning are facilitated by trying to let different writers' works 'speak to' each other?