

- Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
- www.unine.ch/lettres

Sém. Ang II/TC : Literature and Liberty (2AN2136)

Filières concernées	Nombre d'heures	Validation	Crédits ECTS
Pilier principal M A - littératures	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	5
Pilier secondaire M A - littératures	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	5

ph=période hebdomadaire, pg=période globale, j=jour, dj=demi-jour, h=heure, min=minute

Période d'enseignement:

- Semestre Automne

Equipe enseignante

Patrick Vincent

Contenu

"Nothing has ever been more unendurable to man and human society than freedom!" Ivan Karamazov infamous line, in the "Grand Inquisitor" chapter of Dostoyevsky's 1880 novel, continues to challenge us to think about the meaning and desirability of freedom. As we will see, not everyone agrees on the meaning of liberty, what it should entail, or whether it should be enjoyed the same way by all.

Since the beginning of modern liberalism in the seventeenth century, we have tended to associate freedom with basic liberties and rights, including freedom of conscience, speech, assembly, movement, democratic participation, and, more recently, the right to work, education, and health. Yet freedom can mean little or no government, or, on the contrary, more government. It can mean participation in public life, or on the contrary non-interference in the private sphere. For some it means the will of the majority, for others the protection of minorities. For some it is secular, whereas for others it emanates from God. Freedom can be synonymous with social justice, but also with property. It can be understood as a purely formal category, or on the contrary something that involves our most intimate selves.

This course sets out to chart the complex relationship between human society and liberty in five dystopian novels selected for their teaching value at the high school level. All were written in response to twentieth-century attacks on political and civil freedoms, whether in the form of totalitarianism, colonialism, and various instances of economic, racial, sexual and ecological injustice. All speak to our own fraught times. Drawing on political theory and on literary criticism, including essays by Hannah Arendt, Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben, Martha Nussbaum and others, we will question what liberty means, why it is important, and how it can all too easily be taken away.

Forme de l'évaluation

participation (20%), in-class presentation (20%), final essay (60%)

Modalités de rattrapage

Students who fail the essay may rewrite it once.

In case of a pandemic, teaching will go online.

The course AI policy will be posted in the syllabus.

Documentation

The following books can be purchased at Payot:

Sinclair Lewis, It Can't Happen Here
George Orwell, Nineteen-Eighty Four
J.M. Coetzee, Waiting for the Barbarians
Margaret Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale
Octavia Butler, Parable of the Sower

All other reading will be placed on the course Moodle page

Pré-requis

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None

Forme de l'enseignement

Seminar

Objectifs d'apprentissage

Au terme de la formation l'étudiant-e doit être capable de :

- Analyse a complex idea with the help of literary and philosophical texts
- Discuss social, political, and ethical questions that affect our lives
- Present a philosophical or critical essay to help illuminate the primary reading
- Interpret literary texts with the help of secondary reading in the form of an essay