

Time, Self, & the Good Life

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Office hours: Mon., 1:00-2:00; Thurs., 10:30-11:30; and by appointment

Given that time heals and destroys, is lost and found, wasted and spent wisely, how then shall we live?

As we will have seen through the inquiries pursued thus far, narrative – the fashioning and refashioning of the story of the past in and through memory – is a key feature of the elusive being we call the “self.” As some important thinkers have suggested, in fact, there is a distinct sense in which we *are* our stories, our very identities, as selves, emerging through the imaginative fabric of narrative. Even as we move ever backward in time through narrative, however, there remains the challenge and task of moving forward, of growing, developing, flourishing as human beings and as the unique selves we are.

How might we begin to relate the backward movement of narrative with the forward movement of development? What are the *ends* of human development? What does it mean to grow, to flourish, to become *better*? Is it simply a matter of living a life conventionally deemed “good”? Is there something more to the good life, something deeper, perhaps even *beyond* time? In this semester too, we will draw on a wide variety of sources both to clarify some challenging questions and ideas and to formulate for ourselves what our own paths to the good life might be.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Augustine, *Confessions*
Kegan, *The Evolving Self*
Lewis, *Altering Fate*
Seneca, *On the Shortness of Life*
Shakespeare, *King Lear*
Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*
Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

OUTLINE OF COURSE TOPICS AND READINGS

Time, Self, and the Good Life: Fundamental Questions

Wed., 1/20: Welcome back!

Fri., 1/22: Freeman, "Introduction: The Power of Hindsight" (ERes)

"Hindsight, Narrative, and Moral Life" (ERes)

"Oblivion and Attention" (ERes)

Memory, Time, and the Ends of Life

Wed., 1/27: St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book X

Fri., 1/29: *Confessions*, Book XI

Sat. 1/30: Trip to Mt. Auburn Cemetery and Harvard Square, Cambridge

From Narrative to Development

Wed., 2/3: *Confessions*, Books XII & XIII

Fri., 2/5: Freeman, "The Story of a Life" (ERes)

The Postponement of Virtue

Mon., 2/8: Movie: Ride the High Country (Seelos, 7:00)

Wed., 2/10: Primo Levi, selections from *The Drowned and the Saved* (ERes)

Fri., 2/12: Freeman, "Moral Lateness" (ERes)

Time and Tragedy

Wed., 2/17: Shakespeare, *King Lear*

Fri., 2/19: *King Lear* (cont.)

Mon., 2/22: Movie: *King Lear* (Seelos, 7:00)

Exploring the Landscape of Development

Wed., 2/24: Kegan, *The Evolving Self*, Prologue (pp. 1-21),
Chapter One (pp. 25-45)

Fri., 2/26: NO CLASS TODAY

Wed., 3/10: *The Evolving Self*, Chapters Two and Three (pp. 46-110)

Fri., 3/12: *The Evolving Self*, Chapters Four and Five (pp. 113-160)

Mon., 3/15: Movie: *Big Fish* (Seelos, 7:00)

Wed., 3/17: *The Evolving Self*, Chapters Six and Seven (pp. 161-220)

Fri., 3/19: *The Evolving Self*, Chapters Eight and Nine (pp. 221-296)

Priorities and Pathologies

Wed., 3/24: Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*

Fri., 3/26: *The Death of Ivan Ilych* (cont.)

Death, Development, and the Question of the Good

Mon., 3/29: Reading: Selections from Hindsight

Wed., 3/31: Freeman, "The Good Life" (ERes)

Development Reconsidered

Wed., 4/7: Lewis, *Altering Fate*, Chapters 1-3

Fri., 4/9: *Altering Fate*, Chapters 4-7

The Time of Goodness

Wed., 4/14: *Altering Fate*, Chapters 8-9

Fri., 4/16: *Altering Fate*, Chapters 10-11

Time, Consciousness, Being

Wed., 4/21: Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

Fri., 4/23: *To the Lighthouse* (cont.')

How, Then, *Shall* We Live?

Wed., 4/28: *To the Lighthouse* (cont.')

Cluster Banquet: Hogan 4th floor

Fri., 4/30: Seneca, *On the Shortness of Life*

Course Requirements

- 1) Two 5-7 page critical essays (typed, double-spaced)
- 2) A class presentation-and-handout combo (details to be discussed)
- 3) A final paper/project of your own choosing (due Thursday, May 13th)
- 4) A “reflective diary,” focused explicitly on your own experience (use, misuse, abuse, etc.) of time in your daily life. As with last semester, I’m looking for around 10 pages (typed, single-spaced) total. (Let’s say between 8 and 12). Each entry should be dated. Try to do one per week, just to keep up. But your pace is up to you this time. (It gets too routine otherwise.) I’ll collect these twice, once mid-semester, at which time I’ll assign a “hypothetical” grade, mainly to give you some feedback and a sense of how you might progress (if that’s necessary), and once at the end of the semester, at which time I’ll assign a grade for the whole thing.
- 5) Attention, engagement, involvement, preparation, participation, *presence*

Each of the first four requirements will count for approximately 25% of your grade. As for requirement #5 (above), it can work on your behalf depending on the level and substance of your contribution. And it can also hurt you (i.e., diminish your grade) if your attendance is off, if you’re unprepared, slacking, and so on.

Most basically, I need you all to be prepared for class – i.e., to have read (carefully and caringly) the material assigned for each day. Sometimes that happened last semester, and sometimes it didn’t. I realize that, on some days, it may simply be impossible to have all the reading done. But this should be the very rare exception. So *be responsible* – to your classmates (who will sometimes be presenting), to me, and, not least, to yourselves.

Regarding class participation: As much as I’d like to see more active participation this semester from some of you, I realize that in some cases it just runs counter to who you are. Having said this, I hasten to add that when people are actively engaged they generally have much more of a sense of “ownership” and feel that much more connected to what’s going on. So, even though I’m not going to assign an explicit grade in this last context, I’m going to be working hard this semester to bring more of you “in.”

A Few Words on Academic Integrity

Here is what I want to say, in the simplest of terms: *the work you do for this course must be your own*. This doesn't mean that you can't draw on others' work or be influenced by it; no one expects "one's own" work to be utterly devoid of external influence. What it does mean is that the product you create must reflect *your* efforts, *your* efforts, *your* imagination. This will involve proper citation and so on. As importantly, though, it will also involve a moral promise on your part – a promise that you must uphold and enact as you go about your work. **Please familiarize yourself with the Academic Honesty Policy outlined in the College Catalog. You are responsible for knowing the Policy and abiding by it.**

Academic integrity is not only about honesty, however. It is about preparedness for class, intellectual commitment, openness to new ideas, the capacity to listen to others, the ability to engage in sustained dialogue and debate about important issues, and much more. Let's work together to create the best possible learning environment.

As concerns outside-of-class (i.e., co-curricular) events and activities, some will be required of the entire cluster, others will be required of particular sections, and others still will be considered optional (which is not to say unimportant!). Indeed, my main message here is that the co-curricular events and activities are an integral part of our cluster and of Montserrat. They are what link together learning and living and are vitally important to our work together.