Objectives
This Studies class will introduce you to the scholarly discussions that have comprised the so-called “turn to ethics” in literary criticism over the past two decades. It will also engage you in modes of practical textual analysis aimed at illuminating the relationship between the ethical dimensions of literary texts and the formal features of their narrative structures. You will come away from this course with an understanding of at least two of the major impulses within criticism’s turn to ethics. One of these orientations recuperates humanist ideals, emphasizing the role of literature as a repository of values and an agent of moral edification (e.g. Booth, Nussbaum, Phelan), while the other extends the anti-foundational and in some cases anti-humanist commitments of poststructuralism and postmodernism into the domain of ethics, viewing literature as the occasion of an encounter with an intractable otherness that cannot be subsumed within presupposed values and conventional standards of conduct (e.g. Derrida, Spivak, Eaglestone).

The primary texts I have selected all pose problems that can be approached from a variety of literary-critical and ethical perspective. All three novels are formally and/or linguistically inventive, offering occasions to reflect upon the complex interaction of narrative form and ethical function. All the primary materials deal with morally compelling situations, including colonialism and slavery in early America (Morrison), post-apartheid society in South Africa (Coetzee), the Holocaust (Safran Foer), the massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps during the 1982 Lebanon War (Folman’s film Waltz with Bashir), and the detention and deportation of undocumented immigrants in the United States (McCarthy’s film The Visitor).

In order to establish a common frame of reference and a historical foundation for our discussions of ethics and literature, we will devote the first five weeks of the semester to an overview of some of the central texts in the European philosophical tradition to which contemporary treatments of literary ethics frequently refer. These materials include excerpts from Aristotle, Mill, Kant, Levinas, and Derrida. The short stories by Bowles, Camus, and Dib and the poems by Celan and Sachs will serve as departure points for discussions of how these philosophical treatments of ethical questions intersect with literary forms. We will spend the remainder of the semester on “case studies” which examine the assigned works of fiction, poetry, and film alongside further readings in philosophy and literary criticism.

This course has a UHM Contemporary Ethical Issues (E) Focus designation. Contemporary ethical issues are fully integrated into the main course material and will constitute at least 30% of the course content. At least 8 hours of class time will be spent discussing ethical issues. Through the use of lectures, discussions and assignments, you will develop basic competency in recognizing and analyzing ethical issues, deliberating responsibly on ethical issues, and making ethically determined judgments. Many of your writing exercises will ask you address the ethical implications of technology as they are reflected in the assigned materials.

The course also has the UHM Written Communication (W) Focus designation. The class uses writing to promote the learning of course materials. You will get feedback and support from the instructor and your classmates while you do the assigned writing. Your writing for this class will be substantial—a minimum of 4,000 words, or about 16 pages. Written assignments make up to 60% of your final course grade.
**Required Texts** (available at Revolution Books, 2626 South King St # 201, 944-3106)

*Novels*
Coetzee, *Disgrace*; Morrison, *A Mercy*; Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated*

*Criticism and Theory*
Todd and Womak, eds. *Mapping the Ethical Turn: A Reader in Ethics, Culture, and Literary Theory*

*Film* (films will be placed on reserve in Sinclair Library’s Wong Audiovisual Center)
Folman, *Waltz with Bashir*; McCarthy, *The Visitor*

**Student Learning Outcomes**
Upon successful completion of this course you should be able to

- read literary texts and view films critically, attending to details such as narrative structure, style, figurative language, allusions, and dominant themes
- identify key figures and central questions in ethics-oriented literary criticism
- identify key philosophical frameworks for ethical deliberation
- deliberate thoughtfully on ethical questions as they relate to the reading, interpretation, and teaching of literature
- propose and execute an independent scholarly project in literary studies
- write clear, coherent analyses of literary texts and/or films for an academic audience
- demonstrate sound argumentation in your writing
- identify and retrieve scholarly source material using physical and online resources
- document sources accurately and responsibly in your writing using a standard academic style

**Assignments**
Your grade will be based on your performance in the following assignments. I will provide more detailed descriptions of these assignments within the first two weeks of the semester.

- in-class roundtable contribution (5 minute provocative statement, followed by a structured discussion, based on one of your précis)
- analysis of a primary text drawing on at least three of the assigned readings in philosophy and criticism (5 pages)
- abstract for a term paper (1 page)
- term paper based on independent research (20-25 pages)
- a take-home midterm examination
- a take-home final examination
Grading
All assignments are due by class time on the day on which they appear in the schedule. You must complete all assignments to receive a passing grade in this class. Grades for late assignments will be lowered by one letter grade for every day past the due date.

I will assign grades based on the +/- system. I will use the following minimum percentages:

A+ = 100%  A= 95%  A- = 90%
B+ = 87%  B = 83%  B- = 80%
C+ = 77%  C = 73%  C- = 70%
D+ = 67%  D = 63%  D- = 60%
F = 0.0%

In compliance with university policy, I will give incompletes only in cases of documented medical or family emergencies.

Attendance
You are required to attend class regularly and to arrive promptly. All absences are treated equally; missing more than 4 classes will lower your grade by one letter grade. If you miss 6 or more, you will fail the class. If circumstances arise that make it difficult for you to attend class or complete the assigned, please speak with me immediately. As time passes, it becomes harder to come up with a solution that is fair to you and to the rest of the students in the class. Don't wait until the end of the semester, when it will be impossible to make accommodations.

Conduct
Your relationships with your classmates and with me are governed by the Student Conduct Code, which also applies in any the online environments we might be using this semester. I expect you to act in a professional and respectful manner in all of these settings. I also expect you to adhere to the UH Executive Policy on the Use and Management of Information Technology Resources. See the Laulima web site for this class for links to these documents.

If you feel that the conduct of another student in the class is interfering with your ability to work productively, please speak with me about the problem immediately. If you feel that my behavior is impairing your learning, speak with the Associate Chair of the Department of English in KUY 402.

Scholastic Dishonesty
The University of Hawai‘i regulations strictly forbid plagiarism and collusion. Submitting someone else’s work as your own, arranging for someone else to do your writing for you, or purchasing papers will earn you a failing grade for the assignment and may result in a failing grade in the class.

Access
If you feel you need reasonable accommodations because of the impact of a disability, please contact the KOKUA Program at 956-7511 or 956-7612 in Room 013 of the QLCSS. You should also speak with me privately to discuss your specific needs. I am happy to work with you and the KOKUA Program to meet your access needs related to your documented disability.
**Schedule** (subject to change)

Always complete the reading assignments by the day on which they’re listed in the schedule.

You can find all the online/downloadable materials in the folders for each week in the Laulima Resources. If I don’t give page numbers after the title of a text, you’re expected to read the whole thing by the day on which they’re listed.

**WEEK ONE**
January 11
Introduction to the class

January 13
Head, “The Prisoner Who Wore Glasses”

**WEEK TWO**
January 18
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II
Head, “The Prisoner Who Wore Glasses”

January 20
Camus, “The Guest” (Resources)
Yehoshua, “The Absurd as a Moral Guide”

**WEEK THREE**
January 25
Kant, from *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*

January 27
Kant, from *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*
Haslett, “Devotion” (Resources)

**WEEK FOUR**
February 1
Nietzsche, “Second Essay” from *The Genealogy of Morals*

February 3
Levinas, “The Face” and “Responsibility for the Other”

**WEEK FIVE**
February 8
Al-Ali, *A Child in Palestine* (on reserve Sinclair)
Al-Hout, selections from *Sabra and Shatila: September 1982*
Levinas, “Peace and Proximity”

February 10
Folman, *Waltz with Bashir* (on reserve Sinclair Wong AV)

**WEEK SIX**
February 15
Morrison, *A Mercy* 1-42
February 17
Morrison, *A Mercy* 43-100
Derrida, “On Forgiveness”
**Roundtable I**

**WEEK SEVEN**
February 22
Morrison, *A Mercy* 101-167
Booth, “Relocating Ethical Criticism”
Buell, “What We Talk About When We Talk about Ethics”

February 24
Morrison, *A Mercy*
Schwartz, “A Humanistic Ethics of Reading” (Davis and Womack)
Davis and Womack, “Preface: Reading Literature and the Ethics of Criticism” (Davis and Womack)
**Roundtable II**

**WEEK EIGHT**
March 1
Morrison, *A Mercy*
Morrison, Nobel Prize Lecture
Phelan, “Sethe’s Choice: *Beloved* and the Ethics of Reading”
**Analysis of Primary Text DUE**

March 3
**Review for Take-Home Midterm**

**WEEK NINE**
March 8
Butler, “Infinite Detention,” from *Precarious Life*
McCarthy, *The Visitor*

March 10
**Take-Home Midterm Examination DUE**
McCarthy, *The Visitor*

**WEEK TEN**
March 15
**Abstract of Independent Research Project DUE**
Reports on Projects

March 17
Reports on Projects

**WEEK ELEVEN**
Spring Break

**WEEK TWELVE**
March 29
Nussbaum, from *Poetic Justice*
Eaglestone, “One and the Same?: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Truth”
March 31
Coetzee, *Disgrace* 1-122
Meffan and Worthington, "Ethics Before Politics: J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*
Roundtable III

WEEK THIRTEEN
April 5
Coetzee, *Disgrace* 123-174
Attridge, “Age of Bronze, State of Grace: *Disgrace*”

April 7
Coetzee, *Disgrace* 175-220
Marais, “‘Little Enough, Less than Little, Nothing’: Ethics, Engagement, and Change in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee”

WEEK FOURTEEN
April 12
Coetzee, *Disgrace*
Spivak, “Ethics and Politics in Tagore, Coetzee, and Certain Scenes of Teaching”

April 14
Roundtable IV
DRAFT of Independent Research Paper DUE

WEEK FIFTEEN
April 19
Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* 1-74

April 21
Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* 75-141
Collado-Rodriguez, “Ethics in the Second Degree: Trauma and Dual Narratives in Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Everything is Illuminated*”

WEEK SIXTEEN
April 26
Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* 142-213
Roundtable V

April 28
Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* 214-276

May 3
Class Evaluation
Review for Take-Home Final Exam
Independent Research Project DUE

FINAL EXAM
Tuesday, May 10 (11:59 pm)
Take-Home Final Exam DUE