Syllabus for Philosophy of Literature

Course Description: Philosophy of Literature (730:362) is a 3 credit course that meets MW 6:00-9:45, July 6, 2009 - August 12, 2009 in Hickman room 201.

Some of the questions we will consider: What counts as a work of literature? Who decides? Are there objective standards? Do fictional characters exist? Are they created? Can they be destroyed? (Is Sherlock Holmes a man? a detective? an idea? nothing?) How do we make sense of claims about fiction? Why do some claims seem true (Harry Potter is a wizard), some false (Romeo's last name is "Capulet") some open to argument (Hamlet is insane) and some neither true nor false (Jane Eyre has an even number of hairs on her head)? The emotional aspect of fiction: Why do we have an emotional response to literature? Why do we enjoy novels that scare us (The Shining) or make us sad (Marley & Me) or depressed (Anna Karenina)? The interpretation of fiction: What constrains the interpretation of a work of literature? Do the intentions of the author matter or should it be left up to the reader?

Instructor and Office Hours: Heather Demarest, hdem@eden.rutgers.edu Office hours are Thursday 1:00-3:00pm in the Douglass Student Center lounge or by appointment. (Except July 16.)

Schedule:

- Mon, July 6: Introduction to Course, Definitions
- Wed, July 8: Definitions “What Is Literature?” 65
- Mon, July 13: Ontology “Literary Works as Types” 82
- Wed, July 15: Ontology “Fictional Characters as Abstract Objects” 144
- Mon, July 20: Semantics “Truth in Fiction” 119
- Wed, July 22: Semantics “Fiction and Nonfiction” 136
- Mon, July 27: Emotion “Fearing Fictionally” 177
- Wed, July 29: Emotion “The Pleasures of Tragedy” 185
- **Outline Due**

- Mon, Aug 3: Literary Values “Finely Aware and Richly Responsible” 329
- Wed, Aug 5: Literary Values “Literature, Truth, and Philosophy” 341
- Mon, Aug 10: Interpretation “Intention and Interpretation” 291
- **Final Paper Due**
- Wed, Aug 12: Final Exam

Notes: You are required to read a total of ten papers and for each one you must write a summary/response or fill out the class handout. Only your highest six scores will count.

Outline and Paper: The outline format will be given at the beginning of class, so think about what you might like to write on as we go through different topics. The paper must be 5-7 pages and will be graded on structure (your paper must have a clear thesis and argument), content (the paper must address a topic covered in class) and grammar/format/etc. (12 pt font, no funny margins, no misspellings). There are some good online guides for writing a philosophy paper: [http://home.earthlink.net/~owl233/writing.htm](http://home.earthlink.net/~owl233/writing.htm) [http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html)

Grading:

- Six “notes” on articles 5 points (each)
- Outline 15 points
- Final Paper 25 points
- Final Exam 30 points

**Final Grade:** 90-100(A); 85-89(B+); 80-84(B); 75-79(C+); 70-74(C); 65-69(D+); 60-64(D); 0-59(F)