

Philosophy of Literature

The course reviews and analyzes five topics in philosophical commentary on works of literature. The relationship between literature and truth is developed from Plato and Aristotle to analytical and existential philosophies of the twentieth century, including Graham Hough and J.P. Sartre. Theories of interpretation of literary writing are examined from classical rhetorical authors through medieval commentators including Dante and Maimonides to Northrop Frye's theory of myth and a critique of Jacques Derrida's views on deconstructionism. The question of the universality of works of literature or of the claims for pluralism are analyzed through accounts of classicism and enlightenment through interpretations of romanticism. The relevance of theories of the genesis of literature for the understanding of literature is discussed including Marxism, Freudianism and Modernism. The relationship between literature and morality is examined ranging from the thesis that art is necessarily moral to the thesis of art for art's sake.