

IDH 2952 – (Un)Common Art
Orfeo by Richard Powers

Class No. 27946
LIT 117
Period 9 (4:05-4:55 p.m.) W
Fall 2022

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Course Description

(un)Common Arts courses are discussion-oriented courses centered around a performance or exhibition, while (un)Common Reads focus on a single book. They provide 1 academic point toward Honors Completion if accomplished with a grade of B or higher. Grading is primarily participation based. All students are expected to participate vigorously and earn an 'A' in the course.

This section is, despite its course number, a combination of both types of (un)Common courses. It is primarily an exploration of Richard Powers' *Orfeo*, a novel that relates the story of Peter Els, an aging avant-garde composer who has taken to dabbling in DNA manipulation as a post-retirement hobby. Through an offbeat encounter with local police, he's mistakenly identified as a bioterrorist and impulsively flees when the men in hazard suits show up.

Els' odyssey presents not only his adventures as a fugitive, but also a moving retrospective of his artistic and personal journey from young idealist to disillusioned has-been. Along the way, Powers raises and illuminates some rather big questions about the meaning of art and its role in society, the challenges of staying true to one's calling – artistic or otherwise – and the veracity and ambiguity of art and mass media. He also skillfully weaves in a survey of some of the major developments in late-20th and early- 21st century Western art music in a way that makes them both accessible and compelling to readers who are unfamiliar with these genres.

Together, we will read *Orfeo* and chronicle our responses to each chapter, objective and subjective. Additional supporting readings and, especially, guided listening to some of the works that play a role in the novel will enhance the experience. Our goal will be not only to experience this literature, but also to engage some of those big questions about the purpose of art, the role

In addition, my hope is to identify a live performance of some relevant 20th or 21st century music that we can attend together to examine in light of the perspectives we've gained from our reading and discussion of Powers' novel.

Objectives

By the conclusion of this course, students will be able to identify some of the key issues and works in *Orfeo*, as well as articulate their own views about art and its role in contemporary culture and in their own lives.

Course Requirements

Since this course is a discussion-oriented seminar, there will not be any test or exams. Instead, students will be evaluated on their participation during class meetings, online journal entries, and responses to the journals of others. Online entries and responses will be posted on the course Canvas site in E-Learning, as will select readings, video and audio excerpts relevant to the discussions.

In addition, each student will serve as the discussion leader for at least one class meeting (depending on the number of students enrolled). When serving as the leader, a student should be prepared to draw attention to key points, passages, or ideas in that week's reading and, when appropriate, to supplement the discussion with relevant outside materials. Most importantly, they should draw their classmates into a lively discussion.

Grading

The grades for this course will be based on a 100-point system, in the following manner:

60 points = participation in class and online journals. Student are expected to post an entry in their online journal for each week's reading. This may contain both objective analysis of the material and subjective responses to it. You also have the opportunity to respond to the journal entries of your classmates.

40 points = preparation and performance as the course discussion leader.

All grades will be determined based on the following scale (corresponding grade points are listed in parentheses, consistent with the university grading regulations outlined at

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>):

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 92-100 points = A (4.00) | 80-81 points = B- (2.67) | 68-69 points = D+ (1.33) |
| 90-91 points = A- (3.67) | 78-79 points = C+ (2.33) | 62-67 points = D (1.00) |
| 88-89 points = B+ (3.33) | 72-77 points = C (2.00) | 60-61 points = D- (0.67) |
| 82-87 points = B (3.00) | 70-71 points = C- (1.67) | 0-59 points = E (0) |

PLEASE NOTE: If you perceive a grading error, you must address the issue within 72 hours of the grade posting, otherwise the grade is final and will not be discussed further. Specific grade questions and concerns will only be discussed with the student. Due to the 1974 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, I cannot and will not discuss your progress or grades with your parents. For more information on FERPA, please visit <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/ferpa.html>. Any correspondence received from your parents/guardians will be responded to with a link to the FERPA information site and nothing more.

Course Schedule (Tentative)

| Date | Reading | Topic | Assignment |
|----------|-------------|---|--|
| Aug. 24 | | Language of Music | Introduction, Mozart, Copland |
| Aug. 31 | pp. 1-28 | A Man Apart | Journal Entry, Sign-Up to Lead Discussion, Mahler |
| Sept. 7 | pp. 28-64 | Songs on the Death of Children (& Dogs) | Journal Entry, Student-Led Discussion |
| Sept. 14 | pp. 64-92 | TBA (Created by Student Leader) | Journal Entry, Student-Led Discussion, Messiaen |
| Sept. 21 | pp. 92-125 | TBA (Created by Student Leader) | Journal Entry, Student-Led Discussion |
| Sept. 28 | pp. 125-154 | TBA (Created by Student Leader) | Journal Entry, Student-Led Discussion, Crumb, Rochberg |
| Oct. 5 | pp. 154-186 | TBA (Created by Student Leader) | Journal Entry, Student-Led Discussion |
| Oct. 12 | pp. 186-221 | TBA (Created by Student Leader) | Journal Entry, Student-Led Discussion |
| Oct. 19 | pp. 221-245 | TBA (Created by Student Leader) | Journal Entry, Student-Led Discussion, Reich |
| Oct. 26 | pp. 245-273 | TBA (Created by Student Leader) | Journal Entry, Student-Led Discussion, Shostakovich |
| Nov. 2 | pp. 273-306 | TBA (Created by Student Leader) | Journal Entry, Student-Led Discussion |
| Nov. 9 | pp. 306-334 | TBA (Created by Student Leader) | Journal Entry, Student-Led Discussion, Partch, Lieberman |
| Nov. 16 | pp. 334-369 | TBA (Created by Student Leader) | Journal Entry, Student-Led Discussion |
| Nov. 30 | | Summary & Big Questions | Journal Entry, Student-Led Discussion |
| Dec. 7 | | Final Thoughts | |

Attendance

Students are expected to attend class regularly and to arrive on time. Unexcused absences will negatively affect the participation grade. Student taking the online section should plan to be visible, present, and engaged as much as possible.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Conduct and Class Demeanor

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the full class period unless specific arrangements are made with the instructor prior to the class meeting.

Active discussion and questioning is encouraged. However, because of the personal and often-sensitive nature of spiritual beliefs, experiences, and practices, it is essential that our class meetings provide a safe environment for discussing such things. Opinions and beliefs shared by others should be treated with respect and confidentiality. Students sharing such beliefs and opinions should be open to respectful questions.

Conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be kept to a minimum.

The nature of the subject matter in this course encourages the cultivation of sustained attention. Therefore, all electronic devices should be turned off and placed in closed bags. The only exception are those occasions when the instructor may ask one or more students to use their device for a specific purpose (e.g, to look up a term, example, etc. that arises in discussion).

Special Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Technical Issues

Issues with the Canvas site, such as accessing media, submitting assignments, etc., should be addressed to: <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu>.

Academic Honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care:

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center:

<https://counseling.ufl.edu/>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)

Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

<http://www.police.ufl.edu>

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Connections Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://career.ufl.edu/>

Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask> Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>

Writing Studio, 2215 Turlington Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Student Complaints On-Campus: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>