

# Studies in Literature and Politics

Political Science 4234  
MWF 12:30-1:20

Fall – 2014  
C. L. Eubanks

## I. What Does It Mean To Dwell Poetically?

Is God unknown? Is he manifest as the sky? This I tend to believe. Such is man's measure.  
Well deserving, yet poetically man dwells on this earth

Hlderlin

Readings: Hölderlin, *In lovely Blue*

Dwelling Thinking”

## II. What is the Measure of Human Being?

A man thought the gods deigned not to punish mortals who trampled down the delicacy of things  
inviolable. That man was wicked.

Aeschylus

Readings: Aeschylus, *Oresteia*  
Plato, *Republic*, Book IV

## III. The Death of the Gods & The Birth of Freedom?

Zeus: What will they make of it?

Orestes: What they choose. They're free; and human life begins on the far side of despair.

Sartre

Readings: Jean Paul Sartre, *The Flies*  
Jean Paul Sartre, “On Existentialism”

## IV. Freedom for Whom?

I have another duty equally sacred. . . . My duty to myself.

Ibsen

Readings: Ibsen *A*  
John Stuart Mill, “On the Subjection of Women”

## **V. The Birth and Death of Tragedy?**

Come, God -- Bromius, Bacchus, Dionysus -- burst into life, burst into being, be a mighty bull, a hundred-headed snake, a fire-breathing lion. Burst into smiling life, oh Bacchus!

Euripides

Readings: Euripides, *The Bacchae*  
Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

## **VI. The Birth and Death of Man?**

When God made man the devil was at his elbow. A creature that can do anything. Make a machine. And a machine to make the machine. And evil that can run itself a thousand years, no need to tend it.

McCarthy

Readings: Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*  
Simone Weil, *The Iliad, Or the Poem of Force*  
Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 10-15  
John Gray, "Hobbes & McCarthy" *Bacchae*

## **VII. Perhaps there is Something in the Land, Work, and Friendship?**

The two families, sundered in the ruin of a friendship, were united again first in new friendship and then in marriage. My grandfather made a peace here that has joined many who would

## IX. And What, Now, of Dwelling Poetically?

Yet us it behooves, you poets, to stand Bare-headed beneath God's thunderstorms,  
To grasp the father's ray, itself, with our own hands, And to offer to the people  
The heavenly gift wrapt in song, For only if we are pure in heart,  
Like children, are our hands innocent.

Hölderlin

But if he must, the poet remains fearless.  
Alone with god, simplicity keeps him safe  
And needs no weapons and no cunning,  
As long as God's absence comes to his aid.

Hölderlin

Man seeks to articulate his purpose both in an overly subjective and an overly objective state ...  
Yet this purpose can be attained only in a sacred, divine feeling, one that is beautiful because it is  
neither simply agreeable and fortunate, neither simply sublime and strong, nor simply unified  
and tranquil, but which is all of these simultaneously – a feeling which is transcendental and  
where a pure, formal mood has been distilled from it that encompasses life in its entirety.

Hölderlin

Readings: Heidegger, "What are Poets For?"; "... Poetically Man Dwells ..."

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## Course Objectives

First, as you can see from the syllabus, we begin and end this course with Heidegger's famous utterances on language and Being, based on Hölderlin's writings on poets and poetry. Thus, the first question we encounter, and a question we will continue to encounter throughout the semester, is the following: what is the relationship between being, the poetic, and politics? In order to answer this question satisfactorily, we must examine what is meant by poetics, politics, and being. Second, as you can also see, the syllabus continues this reflection on poetry and being by examining a selection of poetic writings with parallel philosophical discussions, each in their own way concerned with an important aspect of human being. In this manner, we shall engage in the exercise of "thinking" about what it means to think poetically about being. (This will require that we spend some considerable time reflecting on the nature of mythos and logos.) Third, and finally, the particular form of being with which we are concerned is the political. Here we diverge considerably from Heidegger and attempt to come to some understanding of what it means to dwell politically and what this being is who does the dwelling, namely the

**Readings:**

The readings are listed on the syllabus. Some are books that I have asked you to purchase, either at local book stores and/or via Amazon or other on-line book sellers. Others are links to internet versions of the readings, such as