

GH301 sec 011: The Immortal Game: A Literary Exploration of Chess (Lit of Chess) (GEN ED – Humanities)

MWF 12-12:50pm

Fall 2016

Professor/Dr. Mossman

Office: Simpkins 217

Phone: 309- 298-1103 (messages only)

Office Hours: MWF 9:30-10:30am; M 2:30-3:30pm

Email: ap-mossman@wiu.edu

Please read this syllabus carefully. It is our contract to be followed for this class.

Course Description

"The game of chess--with its richness, complexity and barely suppressed violence--is an extraordinary metaphor for the human condition. Some of the most important fiction writers and poets ...have fully recognized the uncanny ability of a chess game to represent the contradictions, struggles, and hopes of human society." –*Daniel Schifrin*

In the humanities, chess has played a role as inspiration, metaphor, allegory, problem-solving device—even a key to understanding how we think, learn, and adapt, for hundreds of years. In this course, we will focus on texts and films that incorporate chess, both literally and figuratively, to reveal, question, and comment on the human condition.

Questions we'll address during the course include:

- In what ways has chess served as metaphor and allegory in literature and film?
- In what ways has chess been epistemic in the humanities?
- How is chess employed in contemporary texts and films?
- How have writers used chess to artistically comment on war, governance, morality, leadership, and life in general?

And finally, by studying its intersections with text, we'll try to answer the question, at least for ourselves, what is it about chess that has earned it the title of "the immortal game"?

Pre-requisites: Students must be enrolled in the Centennial Honors College.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- ★ Understand the influence of chess on literature and human understanding of the world through metaphor
- ★ Understand some of the major themes in literature of chess and the way chess is used as a literary or other device
- ★ Make connections between chess and other areas of your personal and professional lives

Required Texts

Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. ISBN 9780156453806

Nabokov, Vladimir. *The Luzhin Defense*. ISBN 9780679727224 (may be titled *The Defense*)

Pérez-Reverte, Arturo. *The Flanders Panel*. ISBN 978-0156029582

Raskin, Ellen. *The Westing Game*. ISBN 9780142401200

Shenk, David. *The Immortal Game: A History of Chess*. ISBN 9781400034086

Grade and Assignment Breakdown

- 📖 2 position papers (15 pts each) = 30 pts
- 📖 Final project = 15 pts
- 📖 Final project presentation = 10 pts

- 📖 Quizzes = 30 pts
- 📖 Outside artifact mini presentation/report = 15 pts

Grading

Qualitative	Final Letter Grade	Total Course Pts.
outstanding effort and/or achievement relative to level necessary to meet requirements; problems v. minor or nonexistent	A	95-100
	A-	90-94
effort and/or achievement significantly above the level necessary to meet requirements; problems few	B+	87-89
	B	83-86
	B-	80-82
effort and/or achievement meets most requirements, but problems exist	C+	77-79
	C	73-76
	C-	70-72
effort and/or achievement worth credit even though fails to meet all requirements; serious problems	D+	67-69
	D	63-66
	D-	60-62
effort and/or achievement level unworthy of credit	F	< 60

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

Responsible academic conduct is required in this and all other Western Illinois University courses. Plagiarism and cheating are serious infractions subject to University policy on academic integrity. Scholastic dishonesty in *any* portion of the work for this course shall be grounds for awarding a grade of F for the assignment *or* an F for the entire course, and further disciplinary action may be taken.

It is crucial that you turn in your own work and that you document the sources for ideas that are not your own. If you are using material or ideas from another source, including the internet and any graphics, and have questions about how to properly document the material, you should consult a style manual for guidelines. If you remain unsure or if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please contact me before the assignment is due or test is given.

Please note that turning in work for this class that was prepared for another class or by another individual will be considered cheating. The policy on plagiarism and cheating applies to all drafts, as well as final products, turned in for this course.

For the university's policy on academic integrity, including plagiarism and cheating, refer to <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>.

Incompletes

An incomplete ("I") grade will be given only in extraordinary circumstances (i.e., prolonged illness, death in family) at my discretion. It will not be considered unless the amount of work remaining in the course is limited (i.e., a single assignment) and you had a passing grade before the incomplete assignment. The assignment of an "I" requires a written agreement between me and you specifying the time and manner in which you will complete the required assignments. Failure to adhere to the contract could result in an F for the missing work and an F for the course.

Late or Missed Work

Generally, I don't accept late work. You can hand work in late only if approved by me and the work may be subject to a grade reduction. If you know you'll miss a class, turn in assignments early. If you are absent for a class meeting, you are responsible for finding out what you missed, if any changes to the syllabus/deadlines were made, and for getting your work to me on time through a friend, my mailbox, or email, as appropriate. For *true* emergencies, talk to me ASAP.

Participation, Preparation, and Peer Feedback

Bring any required materials to class (e.g., textbook, essay draft) and be prepared to discuss readings and work on materials as assigned or noted in the syllabus or the previous class. ***If you come to class unprepared, I may ask you to leave and it will be considered an unexcused absence*** (see "Attendance" section). You will lose points from your overall grade for not being prepared with a draft for writing workshops.

Professionalism and Respect

Respect and care should be shown in your behavior in class, contributions to discussion, interactions with me and your classmates, and the work you do for class assignments. ***During class time, turn off and keep out of sight MP3 players, cell phones, and other things that beep, ring, or vibrate.*** If you read, nap, text, or engage in other distracting behavior during class, you may receive a grade reduction. Disruptive, discourteous, threatening, or harassing behavior will not be tolerated and may result in dismissal from class. If you must have a cell phone on, please speak with me the first day.

Title IX

"University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php. If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>."

Students with Disabilities

"In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner."

Tardiness

Tardiness disrupts lectures and discussions, and is discourteous to your classmates and professor. You are expected to arrive on time and remain for the duration of class. ***A pattern of tardiness may result in 0 class participation points.***

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Full Policy: <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php>

Remember that your grade in this (and any) class is your responsibility to earn. If you find at any time during the term that you are having difficulties meeting the requirements for this course, please speak with me immediately.

Office Hours

I encourage you all to make appointments or stop by my office to discuss the course, assignments, and any concerns you may have at least once during the semester, but hopefully more often. If you can't make it to office hours, email me to set up an appointment.

Guidelines for Writing

Page requirements are based on MLA format: papers must be typed, double-spaced, Times 12 font, with 1 inch margins and following MLA style format for page numbers, heading, citations, and references. I am happy to have you print your papers double-sided, or on the reverse side of previously used or recycled paper. Be sure to properly document all sources (from the course and otherwise). *Your obligation to pay your “intellectual debt” by clearly documenting borrowed language and ideas extends to sources found on the web.*

Use the *Pocket Style Manual* to help you with citations and paper formatting.

Your essays should have a thesis or controlling idea, be carefully structured, clearly written, and meticulously proofread. Actively attempt to persuade your readers that your idea, understanding, or interpretation is valid and useful. Poor presentation in your paper is more than simply a matter of cosmetics: it damages your credibility with your audience by suggesting that you don't care enough about your own ideas to work hard to convey them. Because clarity is vital to the effectiveness of your argument, a poorly written essay is a poor essay, however brilliant conceptually. For help in any stage of the writing process, visit one of the three University Writing Center locations (www.wiu.edu/uwc).

Technology Snafus: How to Avoid Them

First, don't leave things to the very last minute—your risk of a problem is magnified!

? **“I emailed you—didn't you get it?”** I will verify receipt of emails, especially of papers. If you do not receive a confirmation from me, you are free to pester me for one. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to make sure your email or paper arrives in a timely manner.

■ **“My computer crashed.”** Save, save, and save often—on USB/thumb drive, CD-ROM, flash drive, zip disk, in email attachment, whatever. This way, you'll be able to salvage something, even if it is not a finished, polished draft.

☞ **“The computer wouldn't read my file.”** Most computers on campus read Microsoft Word. When in doubt, especially if you are navigating computer labs, try saving as text only or RTF.

☞ **“My printer ran out of ink.”** In a pinch, I will accept papers in any color ink if it is legible (not yellow), so if your black ink cartridge dies, try the color one. You should always have a spare cartridge on hand.

☐☐ **“I couldn't access WesternOnline to download the document.”** If this happens, contact me immediately and I can email you any document you might need.

Tips for Success in this Course

- ☑ Come to class and participate
- ☑ Keep up with the readings and stay on schedule with all assignments
- ☑ Read syllabus & handouts carefully; note where to go for policies & other information
- ☑ Read the guidelines & evaluation criteria for all assignments carefully
- ☑ Check your email and WesternOnline frequently (once a day)
- ☑ Talk with me about any questions or concerns as they arise, and meet with me for feedback on your work

Attendance

Attendance is required at all class meetings, just as showing up to work is required in any workplace. If you will miss class, you should notify me beforehand via email or phone, just as you would in the workplace. The reasons below may be considered excused in this class, provided you submit written documentation as soon as possible to me:

- Verified (documented) illness for which you were hospitalized or received emergency care (i.e., a note from a doctor saying you were at Beu Health Center during class is not sufficient)
- Participation in athletic events or other group activities sponsored by the University (provide documentation ahead of the absence)
- Serious family emergencies (contact me within 24 hours of the absence)
- Subpoenas and jury duty (provide documentation ahead of the absence when possible)
- Military service and religious observances within your faith (provide documentation ahead of the absence)

While I cannot anticipate all scenarios, experience has shown me that responsible students make every effort to attend class and when they cannot, they contact me as soon as possible (even before class) and are very conscientious about making up work. *Ultimately, I reserve the right to determine whether an absence will affect your grade for the course.*

You are permitted 3 unexcused absences—consider it one personal day and two sick days. Each subsequent unexcused absence will cost you 5 points from your overall grade. In order not to lose the points, you can choose to complete an extra assignment (assigned by me) for each unexcused absence; the assignment must be turned in by a designated date and be of B quality or better. After 6 total unexcused absences, this option will be retracted.

Should a real emergency (e.g., protracted illness or family crisis) cause you to miss more than six class periods, or if you have an excessive number of excused and unexcused absences, you must contact me immediately to determine whether or not you will be able to complete the minimum work required to pass the course or whether you have other options (such as a withdrawal).

**University Student Absence Policy Clarification (see also
http://www.wiu.edu/student_services/student_development_office/current/absencepolicy.php)**

Students are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled except in cases of illness or other serious emergency. Each faculty member determines his or her own policy dealing with class attendance. Therefore, if a student misses a class or classes, the student is expected to discuss the matter with the instructor, and it is up to the discretion of the instructor whether to allow a student to make up any missed assignments, exams, or projects.

If a student knows he or she is going to miss a class, the student is advised and is expected to discuss the situation with the appropriate faculty member in advance and in accordance with that faculty member's guidelines for class attendance. If documentation of the reason or reasons for an absence is desired by the faculty member, the student should inquire of the faculty member what would suffice for that purpose (e.g., medical documentation, proof of court appearance, etc.).

If a student needs medical documentation, he or she should contact the proper medical source directly for whatever material is needed. Neither the Student Development Office nor the Beu Health Center issue excuses for not attending class, but a student may obtain a form indicating the date and time of a completed medical appointment at the Health Center, for example, should a faculty member desire or require such evidence.

If a student makes a decision not to attend a class because of a non-emergency illness or injury (e.g., sore throat, cold, sprained ankle, etc.), it is the responsibility of the student to discuss the absence with the faculty member should the student desire to make up any academic work missed because of the absence. Depending upon such factors as the faculty member's class attendance policy, the reasons for the absence, and the student's prior record of class attendance, the faculty member may or may not grant the request to make up work that has been missed. It is emphasized that it is the individual faculty member's decision whether or not to grant the request.

The Student Development Office will serve as a contact resource for a student in extreme/emergency cases when the student is unable to make contact with a faculty member. Accidents/hospitalizations that occur out of town, death of an immediate family member (mother, father, sister, brother), serious emotional/psychological problems, serious physical injuries or trauma, and medically prescribed inpatient treatment for substance abuse are examples of situations where the Office of Student Development and Orientation might appropriately be contacted and called upon for assistance.

If the president issues a "University Advisory" because of an emergency condition (such as inclement weather) and classes are not canceled, students should arrange with faculty to complete academic course requirements missed during the time of the advisory. Individual faculty members are responsible for their academic course requirements and it is the individual faculty member's decision whether or not to grant a request to make up work that has been missed as a result of a "University Advisory". If classes are canceled, faculty members will inform students at a later time how missed course activities will be satisfied.

Assignment Descriptions

2 position papers (15 pts each). For each position paper (each 2-4 pages, double spaced), you will choose one of the following questions/topics (you can choose a question/topic only once):

1. Is chess the universal, cross-cultural metaphor? Does it facilitate communication or impede it?
2. Is chess epistemic? In other words, can chess serve to actually create knowledge and understanding?
3. How do writers, cartoonists, filmmakers, and others use chess to artistically comment on war, governance, morality, leadership, community, family, power dynamics, race relations, politics, etc.?
4. Come up with a different question you would like to address (approved by me).

To support your position responses, consider the texts we've read, cartoons I've shown, films we've watched, and references to chess in everyday life, and how writers, artists, filmmakers, and others use chess as metaphor. Cite at least two sources in each paper (following proper citation guidelines).

Final project (15 pts). You will choose a topic to research and present on that addresses the broad topic (Chess and the Humanities) in some way. The project will require a written report along with a visual component (i.e., poster, PowerPoint, game, work of art, teaching manual, film); for 280 credit, it must incorporate outside research and citations.

Final project presentation (10 pts). Presentation to the class on your project that summarizes your project, its purpose, and its relevance to chess and the humanities. Approximately 5-8 minutes.

Quizzes (30 pts). Quizzes will be on the readings, films, and class discussions since the last quiz.

Outside artifact mini presentation with report (15 pts). Throughout the semester, each student will find an article, poem, song, or news item regarding chess and the humanities or the human condition. You will write a brief report that summarizes the artifact, its relevance to the topic, and how it ties in with something we've read, watched, or discussed so far this semester, or how it raises a topic or issue we have not yet addressed but could. You will also do a brief presentation to the class on this artifact—you may provide copies or otherwise develop a PowerPoint or activity to help the class engage the artifact. Presentations should be 10-15 minutes.

See assignment sheets for more details.

Course Schedule

(subject to revision; readings may be added or deleted with advance notice)

Unit	Date	In Class Activity	Reading Due That Day	Writing Due That Day	
Openings: Where We Come From (History and Origins of Chess in World Culture)	8/22				
	8/24		Shenk: Appendix I		
	8/26		Shenk Ch. 1-3		
	8/29	Quiz	Shenk Ch. 4		
Middle Game: Who We Are in Love and War, Madness and Reason	8/31	<i>Queen to Play (1:41)</i>			
	9/2	<i>Queen to Play</i>			
	9/5	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS			
	9/7		Perez-Reverte (ch. 1-3)		
	9/9		Perez-Reverte (ch 4-6)		
	9/12		Perez-Reverte (ch 7-10)		
	9/14		Perez-Reverte (ch 11-12)		
	9/16	Quiz	Perez-Reverte (finish book)		
	9/19		Shenk Ch. 5; Appendix III		
	9/21	Chess Day			
	9/23		Raskin (Ch. 1-7)		
	9/26		Raskin (Ch. 8-14)		
	9/28		Raskin (Ch. 15-21)		
	9/30	Quiz	Raskin (finish book)		
	10/3		Shenk Ch. 6 - 8		
	10/5	<i>Searching for Bobby Fischer (1:49)</i>			
	10/7	<i>Searching for Bobby Fischer</i>			
	10/10	Chess Day			
	10/12	workshop		Position paper 1 draft due	
	10/14	FALL BREAK – NO CLASS			
	10/17		Nabokov (ch 1-4)		
	10/19	NO CLASS			Position paper 1 due
	10/21		Nabokov (ch 5-8)		
	10/24		Nabokov (ch 9-11)		
	10/26		Nabokov (ch 12-13)		
	10/28	Quiz	Nabokov (finish book)		

	10/31	<i>The Luzhin Defence (1:49)</i>		
	11/2	<i>The Luzhin Defence</i>		
	11/4		Shenk Ch. 9 &10	
	11/7		Calvino (ch 1-3/pp. 1-56)	
	11/19		Calvino (ch 4-6/pp. 59-99)	
	11/11	Quiz	Calvino (finish book)	
	11/14	workshop		Draft position paper 2 due
	11/16	Discuss final projects		Position paper 2 due
	11/18	Chess Day		
	11/19-27 THANKSGIVING BREAK			
	11/28		Shenk Ch. 11 & 12	
	11/30	<i>Knights of the South Bronx (1:30)</i>		
	12/2	<i>Knights of the South Bronx</i>		
	12/5		presentations	Final project due
	12/7		presentations	Final project due
	12/9		presentations	Final project due
	12/12	Chess Day @ 1pm		