1. Course Aims and Objectives

The aim of this course is to introduce and critically evaluate some of the central philosophical issues raised by fiction. The course will investigate issues in the philosophy of language, epistemology, the philosophy of emotions and mind, and ethics.

The course will engage the following topics:

- What is fiction?
- What kind of emotional or cognitive responses to we have to fiction?
- What is truth in fiction?
- Can knowledge be gained by engaging with fictions? If so, what kind?
- Can fictions be immoral? What impact does this have on our engagement with them? Does this impact upon our aesthetic evaluation of them?

The course will utilise both classic and contemporary sources to investigate these questions. We will critically evaluate some of the most prominent philosophical responses to the questions, and you will be encouraged to develop you own thoughts about the arguments and positions covered.

2. Intended Learning Outcomes

On completion of this course students will be able to:

(1) Demonstrate a well-rounded understanding of some of the central debates in the Philosophy of Fiction.
(2) Engage with the essential readings assigned by identifying their arguments, and evaluating their strengths and weaknesses.
(3) Understand some of the reasons for accepting or rejecting the various philosophical theses covered.
(4) Write with clarity, rigor, and originality.

3. Contact Time

The course content will be delivered by a weekly two hour seminar, which will run for eleven weeks. You are expected to read the set text(s) in advance of the seminars. Prior to each seminar I will distribute a selection of questions about the reading to help you to prepare for class. I expect you to write out answers to these questions and come to class ready to discuss them.

In addition to the seminar, I will be available to answer any questions about the course or the readings at my office hours. My drop-in office hours will be communicated once term starts. If it’s not possible to attend to office hours, please drop me an email and we can arrange another time to talk.

4. Course Content and Reading

All of the required readings for this course are available online, either through the University library website or PhilPapers.
Below are the details of required readings for each topic. As this is a fourth year course, I expect you to utilise your own research skills to find further resources. PhilPapers is a fantastic place to start.

**Week 1 – What is fiction? I – and Introducing the course and the philosophy of fiction**

Required Reading

**Week 2 – What is fiction? II**

Required Reading

**Week 3 – What is fiction? III**

Required Reading

**Week 4 – The paradox of fiction I**

Required Reading
Radford, C. (1975) ‘How Can We Be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?’, in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.


**Week 5 – The paradox of fiction II**

Required Reading


**Week 6 – Truth in fiction I**

Required Reading


**Week 7 – Truth in fiction II**
Required Reading


Week 8 – Learning from fiction I


Week 9 – Learning from fiction II


Week 10 – The ethical engagement with fiction I

Required Reading


Week 11 – The ethical engagement with fiction II

Required Reading


5. Assessment

The course will be assessed by two essays. The first is a 1,500 word essay and it will be due in October. The second is a 2,500 word essay and it will be due after the end of the course. Precise dates will be communicated in due course.

There are no set essay titles or questions. For this course you will be required to decide on a topic and design your own question. I strongly encourage you to come and meet with me to discuss your essays plans at least a week before the deadline.