

# ENG 261

## *Literature and the Crisis of Authority in the West (Lit. and Social Conflict)*

Instructor: G. Kuchar

Email: [kucharg@uvic.ca](mailto:kucharg@uvic.ca)

Phone: 250-721-7248



### Course description:

This course is a study in literature and ethics at times of moral crisis. In it, we shall examine plays, poems, criticism, and a novella which ask some of the following questions at different moments in Western history: how do you make a decision that will forever change the course of your life? On what grounds do you decide to act, knowing that it might cost you everything? How do you make such decisions when there is no clear authority or value system to guide you? How do you make sense of the world when so many forms of authority are in decline, including the authority of our own personal agency? How do recognize the difference between power and authority in order to act and think accordingly? In addressing such questions, we shall consider the role literature can play as “equipment for living,” particularly through the study of literature in its political, philosophical, and psychological contexts.

**Proposed assignments:** (Include the nature and number of assignments and percentages for each.)

TBA

**Proposed reading list:**

*The Book of Genesis* (Chs. 1-3) and its Gnostic and Orthodox Interpretations; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*; Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*; Christopher Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*; Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*; Aemilia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*; Herman Melville, *Billy Budd*; Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia* and *The Ego and The Id*. Some Selected Poems from the Renaissance to the 20<sup>th</sup> century including works by John Donne, T.S. Eliot, Derek Walcott, and others.