

E 603A: Composition and Reading in World Literature (34170)

Instructor: George S. Christian

Office Hours: Calhoun 6, MWF 8-9 or by appointment

Location: MEZ 1.118

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Course Description

This course is intended to introduce students to some of the formative texts of the western literary tradition. During the fall semester, we will read the epic poetry of Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton; Greek and Shakespearean tragedy, and the first part of the great comic novel, *Don Quixote*. Through intensive engagement with the texts, both in terms of close reading and frequent writing assignments, we will not only explore the formal elements of the genres we encounter, but trace the emergence of the basic structures of gender, class, racial, and other social and political categories by which we routinely—and often unthinkingly—organize our so-called “modern” experience. As we proceed through the semester, keep the following questions in mind. Why are stories so important to “culture”? Why do we retell the same stories over and over again? How does literature transmit cultural values across time and space? Does literature reflect values already in existence or does it construct or generate those values? Can literature effect social and cultural change? What work, if any, does literature actually do? By the end of the semester, we should begin to formulate provisional answers to some of these questions, answers that will be tested as we move into the recognizably “modern” era next spring.

Course Requirements:

- Weekly reading. Reading assignments for each class are given in the detailed syllabus below. Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that class period.
- Regular participation in discussion sessions. Active participation in the weekly discussion sessions is an important part of the final grade in the class (see below). You may be asked to set the tone for one or more of our class discussions by presenting two or three critical questions for examination.
- Papers. Five essays, each 4-5 typed pages long, will be required during the semester (the due dates are listed on the detailed syllabus below). For your sanity and mine, **NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED**. You will be given the opportunity to revise each essay to improve your grade. The purpose of this revision policy is to encourage you to work intensively on your writing during the semester. In order to receive a higher grade on a revised paper, the revision must do more than just represent the same material in a copyedited form. It should respond substantively and structurally to my comments and demonstrate a progression in your analysis of the particular subject. Please do not hesitate to see me in office hours or by appointment to work on your writing or to discuss your ideas (or anything else, for that matter!). I will make whatever time is necessary to work with you. No effort will be spared to make this class a successful and satisfying intellectual experience for you.
- Mandatory attendance. Attendance is mandatory. No one absent more than three classes in a semester will receive a passing grade. If you must miss a class, please let me know in advance, if possible. You will still be responsible for the reading and getting notes from another student on what you missed. Missed quizzes may not be made up. If you must be absent on a class day on which a paper is due, you must arrange to turn the paper in prior to that class period.

Books and Course Materials:

- Homer, *The Odyssey*
- Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*
- Virgil, *The Aeneid* (first six books)
- Dante, *The Inferno*
- Shakespeare, *Macbeth*
- Milton, *Paradise Lost*
- Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (Part 1)

(available at the University Co-op)

Grading

- Class participation (attendance, reading, discussion) 25%
- Papers (15% each) 75%

* No plus/minus grades will be submitted for this course.

Accommodations

Students who require special accommodations should notify me at the beginning of the semester (or as soon as possible), and such accommodations will be made. Students requesting special accommodations should obtain a letter from the Services of Students with Disabilities (SSD) Office. To ensure that the most appropriate accommodations can be provided, students should contact the SSD office at 471-6259 or 471-4641.

Schedule

Introduction: August 27

- I. Epic Poetry and Myths of Origin: The Odyssey
 - September 1: Books 1-4\
 - September 3: Books 5-8
First Paper Due on September 3
 - September 8: Books 9-12
 - September 10: Books 13-16
 - September 15: Books 17-20
 - September 17: Books 21-24 First Paper revision due on September 17

- II. The Tragic Vision: The Oresteia and Macbeth
 - September 22, 24: The Oresteia
 - September 29, October 6: Macbeth Second Paper Due on October 6

- III. Roman Foundations: The Aeneid
 - October 8: Books 1-3
 - October 13: Books 4-6

- IV. Medieval Worlds: The Inferno
 - October 15: Cantos 1-6 Second Paper revision due on October 15
 - October 20: Cantos 7-16
 - October 22: Cantos 17-23 Third Paper Due on October 22
 - October 27: Cantos 24-34

- V. Puritan Epic: Paradise Lost
 - October 29: Books 1-3 Third Paper revision due on October 29
 - November 3: Books 4-6
 - November 5: Books 7-9
 - November 10: Books 10-12 Fourth Paper due on November 10

VI. The Comic Inversion: Don Quixote, First Part (Chapters 1-52)

- November 12: Chapters 1-6
 - November 17: Chapters 7-18 Fourth Paper revision due on November 17
 - November 19: Chapters 19-36
 - November 24: Chapters 37-43
 - December 1: Chapters 44-52 Fifth Paper due on December 1
- Final Thoughts: December 3
Fifth Paper revision due: TBD (during finals period)

The University of Texas Honor Code:

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

University Electronic Mail Notification Policy:

(Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students)

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at: <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>.

In this course e-mail will be used as a means of communication with students. You will be responsible for checking your e-mail regularly for class work and assignments. Note: if you are an employee of the University, your e-mail address in Blackboard is your employee address.

Use of Blackboard in Classes:

This course uses Blackboard, a Web-based course management system in which a password-protected site is created for each course. (Student enrollments in each course are updated each evening.) Blackboard can be used to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to take online quizzes and surveys.

You will be responsible for checking the Blackboard course site regularly for class work and announcements. As with all computer systems, there are occasional scheduled downtimes as well as unanticipated disruptions. Notification of these disruptions will be posted on the Blackboard login page. Scheduled downtimes are not an excuse for late work. However, if there is an unscheduled downtime for a significant period of time, I will make an adjustment if it occurs close to the due date. Blackboard is available at <http://course.utexas.edu>. Support is provided by the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400 Monday through Friday 8 am to 6 pm, so plan accordingly.