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ENG 2601-001: Backgrounds of Western Literature

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ENGLISH 2601.001: Backgrounds of Western Literature (3 credits): Spring 2015

[Catalog Course Description: A reading of major world masterpieces through the Renaissance, works that have influenced literature in English, by such writers as Homer, Sappho, Sophocles, Plato, Virgil, Ovid, Marie de France, Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes. Required of English majors, open to others.]

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Office Hours: TR 10:45-12:30, F 10-12
and by appointment.

I. **TEXTS:**

Literature of the Western World
Holy Bible (King James Version)
Dante's Inferno (Ciardi's trans.)

II. **ASSIGNMENTS** (with appropriate grade % for each):

1. **Reading Quizzes:** These will be unannounced short in-class writings given at the beginning of a class, lasting around 5 minutes. They should pressure you to keep up with the reading, to have some background for discussions. 6-7 quizzes will be given. The 5 highest grades will be averaged into one. Missed quizzes cannot be made up. (10%)
2. **Critical Papers:** Two papers (4-6 pages). Papers should be explorations of critical ideas that occur as you read the literature—NOT RESEARCH PAPERS (do not use secondary sources). Papers must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins to allow for comments. (30%)
3. **Midterm:** An open-book exam covering the readings up to that point. (20%)
4. **Final:** This examination will cover most of the semester's readings. Any readings that are excluded will be specified before the exam date. This exam will be open-book and given during the final exam week. (30%)
5. **Class Participation:** Discussion is a very important part of this course. Expressing your reactions to the poems will help you to think critically about them and about your reactions to them, and that will help make writing the papers less intimidating. So, you will be expected to voice your thoughts. (10%)

III. **Learning Objectives:** This course introduces some of the enduring literature of what has come to be known as "Western Civilization." Please recognize that the material you will be reading has been read and re-read for centuries. It was not written for students in college lit courses. Through these readings and a flexible, thoughtful reader's response to them, each of you will encounter writers trying to deal with some basic human problems: the substance of spiritual reality and the relationship between it and human beings in their cultures; definitions of love, of human interactions, of justice, of the ideal state and citizen. The issues are inexhaustible. The readings and writings (yours) and the discussions (ours) in this course should raise fundamental questions for you to think about critically.

IV. **ATTENDANCE:** Without regular attendance, you will probably not know enough about how the course readings have been examined and explained. A significant part of various test questions will be based on lectures and discussions. Without knowing about these, you may well be unable to cope with the exams. Therefore, each student is responsible for **all** of those parts of the classroom experience. **More than 4 unexcused absences will result in a failing participation grade.**

V. **LATE WORK:** All assignments are due on the dates specified. Late papers are not allowed. If you cannot complete an assignment on time, you must see or contact me **before** it is due.

VI. FINAL NOTES:

- 1) **Students with disabilities**—If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.
- 2) **Academic integrity**—Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct. (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.
- 3) **The Student Success Center**—Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (<http://www.eiu.edu/~success>) for assistance with time management, text taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

2601.001, Abella: Course Calendar:

- Jan. 13 Introduction
15 Genesis 1-11; 17; 37
20 Genesis 38-50
22 Exodus 1-21; Ruth
27 Job 1-21
29 Job 28, 32-42; Jonah
- Feb. 3 Homer: Odyssey: Books 1-8, p. 273
5 Odyssey: Books 9-16
10 Odyssey: Books 17-24
12 Odyssey
17 Aeschylus: Agamemnon, p. 612
19 Agamemnon
24 Aeschylus: The Libation Bearers, p.669
26 The Libation Bearers
- Mar. 3 Aeschylus: The Eumenides, p.705
5 The Eumenides
10 **MIDTERM**
12 Euripedes: Medea, p. 844
17 SPRING BREAK
19 SPRING BREAK
24 Medea; Sappho, p. 1141; **PAPER #1 DUE**
26 Catullus, p. 1158
- Apr. 31 Virgil: Aeneid I-IV, p. 967
2 Aeneid V&VI; VIII&XII
7 Dante: Inferno
9 Inferno
14 Inferno; De Pizan: The Book of the City of Ladies, p. 1762
16 Boccaccio: The Decameron, First, Third, Fourth and Fifth Days, p. 1876
21 Tenth Day
23 De Navarre: The Heptameron, Stories 8, 18, 19, 36, p. 1916
28 Story 55
30 **PAPER #2 DUE** (Final Exam: May 6th, 8-10 am)