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ENG 2601-002: Backgrounds of western literature

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English 2601.2: BACKGROUNDS of WESTERN LITERATURE

Spring 2008 / TTh 18:30-17:45 / Coleman 3290

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Course Description

Here is a description for "Backgrounds of Western Literature," according to the university website:

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.

This class will introduce you to a few European works that for one reason or another became important to something called "the Western tradition." During the semester, I hope to familiarize you with some of the ideas of this "tradition," as well as question some of its assumptions. We cannot hope to survey the vast histories and literatures of many cultures that preceded the Renaissance (or, as it is often referred to today, the "Early Modern Period"). We can try, however, to gather a sense as to the enormity of philosophical, literary, and cultural achievement preexisting the modern world. In doing so, we must be prepared to encounter worlds and cultures that are very foreign to our own, while at the same time recognize that, despite this vast gulf of time, we may encounter surprisingly familiar ways of seeing the world. The documents we will read in this class are both literally and figuratively translations. That is to say, these texts translate a very foreign world into a language accessible to us—not only into English, but also into a modern idiom that didn't exist when it was written.

You will be expected to participate in our class discussions on a daily basis, so you must come to class having read the course material. Much of the reading will be extensive and difficult: you should count on **at least** five hours of reading per week.

We will begin with Longinus' treatise "On the Sublime," and move to the *Oedipus Rex* and *Philoctetes* of Sophocles, since they were written before everything else on our syllabus (fifth century B.C.E.), except of course for Homer's *The Iliad*. We will proceed more or less chronologically from there, once again with the exception of *The Iliad*. A few of these texts will be in the Course Reader, bridging the large historical gap between Sophocles and Petrarch.

Texts

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Decameron* (1351 CE)
 De Troyes, Chrétien. *Arthurian Romances* (1177-1181 CE)
 Cervantes, Miguel de. *Don Quijote* (1605 CE)
 Homer. *The Iliad* (c. 8th or 7th century BCE)
 Longinus. *On the Sublime* (c. 1st or 3rd century CE)
 Petrarch. Sonnets. (1340s)
 Plato. *The Republic* (c. 360 BCE)
 Sophocles. *Oedipus Rex* (429-425 BCE)
 Philoctetes (409 BCE)

Hacker, Diane. A Pocket Style Manual.

Course Reader, available **after Week 2** at the Copy Shop in the Student Union.

****ALL ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS MUST BE COMPLETED TO PASS THE COURSE****

Academic honesty: Students are responsible for knowing Eastern Illinois University regulations and policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism will likely result in your failing the course and in further action by the university. Here is the English Department's statement on plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism – “The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own original work” (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) – has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

Paper Policies

Papers—and all other assignments—are due at the beginning of class. **Late papers will not be commented upon, and be marked a half grade lower for every class period late. Essays turned in as email attachments are considered late. Period. End of discussion.** Essays turned in a week past the deadline will be given a “zero,” but must nevertheless be submitted in order to pass the course.

Your paper should be stapled and include page numbers. Format: 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins.

Absence Policy:

When you are absent—especially when you are frequently absent—two things happen. First, your participation grade drops substantially. Second, you naturally fall behind in understanding course material and neither the class nor the Professor can catch you up on everything missed in a day's class. YOU need to decide when it is absolutely necessary to miss class. Be wise. It bears repeating: you cannot make up missed work and late assignments will be penalized. Whether these are excused or unexcused absences does not matter for this course. Being late for class will be counted as an absence.

If you are late for or miss more than five (5) class meetings, you cannot pass this course. If you think you will be late for or miss more than five classes, you should strongly reconsider registering for this class. Once you have missed six classes, you are welcome to continue visiting the class, but you will receive a failure on your transcript.

Emailing Policy:

I want to get to know you and your work this semester. Thus I ask that you call me or stop by my office during office hours (or scheduled times) so that we can talk. **DO NOT EMAIL ME TO ASK FOR AN “UPDATE” ON MISSED ASSIGNMENTS, OR TO EXPLAIN AN ABSENCE.** Working groups will be assigned so that you can contact group members for notes and missed work.

Requirements

All assignments and exams must be turned in to pass the course.

Longinus Paper: due Friday, January 18, 1:00 pm (15%)

Exams: Midterm, March 6 and 18 (25%)

Final Exam, during finals week April 29 (35%)

Presentation of Critical Work: ~ weeks 14-15 (5%)--see below

Class Participation: see below (20%)

Longinus Paper (15%)

Our first reading and assignment in this course will be on Longinus' treatise “On the Sublime,” a theoretical essay written either in the first or the third century of the Common Era. Your task will be to find a text to apply Longinus' ideas on the sublime, and show how an analysis of the sublime helps a reader to produce a more thorough understanding of the text.

Midterm Exam, March 6 and 18 (25%)

The midterm exam will consist of two parts: an in-class section, which must be written on March 8 during our class period (no exceptions) and a take-home section, which must be handed in during our first class after the spring break (March 20). The take-home section will require you to analyze two passages from our early-semester readings.

Presentation of a Critical Work (5%)

By Week 12, you will have found a critical work (i.e., secondary sources) on any of the texts we will read in this course. This article should be at least fifteen pages in length. You will inform me of the work you have chosen in proper bibliographic citation (please refer to your reference handbook). In the classes leading up to the end of the semester, I will ask you to give a brief (five-minute), formal presentation to the class on the work.

Final Exam (35%)

The exams will verify your engagement with the class material through identification, short-answer, and essay questions. Like the midterm, the final exam will contain both take-home and in-class sections.

Class Participation (20%)

There will be a number of required, yet ungraded assignments throughout the quarter, constituting a substantial portion your class-participation grade. I will expect you to come to class having read the material, and with questions or comments on the readings. Some of the course material may be quite tough slogging: you should pinpoint specific moments of reading difficulty, and query me ("test" me, if you will) about them. If you attend class without reading the texts carefully and completely, you will almost certainly fail the two exams, and your class-participation grade will suffer immensely. If necessary, we will have unannounced quizzes at the beginning of class. You cannot "make up" missed quizzes; however, if you perform inadequately on a quiz, you will be asked to write a paper demonstrating that you have read the tested material.

Important disclaimers...**Conduct**

Instructors are responsible for maintaining order and a positive learning environment in the classroom. Students whose behavior is disruptive either to the instructor or to other students may be required to discontinue course activities and to cancel the course registration (or be disenrolled). In addition, students may be subject to disciplinary action.

Grades

Your instructor sets the requirements and grading criteria for specific assignments. Here are general standards for grades:

- A = Achievement that is outstanding and unique
- B = Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet the requirements
- C = Assignment meets the basic requirements in every respect
- D = Assignment meets only some of the requirements and is worthy of credit
- F = Assignment does not substantially meet the basic requirements

For in-class or other brief writing assignments, you will be graded on a scale of $\sqrt{+}$, $\sqrt{}$, $\sqrt{-}$, or $\sqrt{=}$. Work that is strongly engaged and on-topic will receive a $\sqrt{+}$. Satisfactory work that is on-topic will receive a $\sqrt{}$. Work that shows little engagement or is off-topic will get a $\sqrt{-}$ or a $\sqrt{=}$.

Incompletes

Incompletes are not given except in the most extraordinary circumstances (e.g., medical emergency), which a student must be able to document, and only if just a small part of the course remains to be finished. The student and teacher must make a written agreement concerning the condition of the incomplete.

Cell Phones

All those not turning off their cells and/or other electronic devices will be subject to relentless mockery, public shaming, and, if necessary, unimaginably gothic tortures. More importantly, your class participation grade will be *severely* compromised.

Text Messaging

If you send or receive texts during class, you advertise to everyone around you that you are a pathetic junkie who cannot survive without an umbilical cord to the chatter of others. Just thought you'd like to know.

English 2601.2: Schedule of Classes—subject to revision

WEEK ONE

T Jan 8 Introductions

Th Jan 10 Longinus' "On the Sublime"

WEEK TWO

T Jan 15 Longinus' "On the Sublime"

Th Jan 17 Longinus' "On the Sublime"

F Jan 18 **Longinus Paper due; Deadline to Drop without a grade**

WEEK THREE

T Jan 22 Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*

Th Jan 24 **Individual Conferences with Prof. Wharram in his office, room 3010 in Coleman**

WEEK FOUR

T Jan 29 Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*

Th Jan 31 Sophocles' *Philoctetes*

WEEK FIVE

T Feb 5 Sophocles' *Philoctetes*

Th Feb 7 Plato's *The Republic* Books VII and X

WEEK SIX

T Feb 12 Plato's *The Republic* Books VII and X

Th Feb 14 de Rougement's *Love in the Western World*

WEEK SEVEN

Tu Feb 19 de Troyes' *Arthurian Romances*

Th Feb 21 de Rougement's *Love in the Western World*

WEEK EIGHT

Tu Feb 26 de Troyes' *Arthurian Romances*; Petrarch's "Sonnets"

Th Feb 28 Boccaccio's *Decameron*

WEEK NINE

Tu Mar 4 Boccaccio's *Decameron*

Th Mar 6 **MIDTERM EXAM/PAPER**

WEEK TEN

Mar 10 - 14 **SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS**

WEEK ELEVEN

Mon, Mar 17 REQUIRED LECTURE: 7:00pm—Grand Ballroom of the MLK Union—SUSAN BORDO's keynote address for Women's History Month

Tu Mar 18 **MIDTERM PAPER due;** Boccaccio's *Decameron*

Th Mar 20 Boccaccio's *Decameron*

WEEK TWELVE

Tu Mar 25 **Individual Conferences**

Th Mar 27 **Individual Conferences; Choice of Critical Work due**

WEEK THIRTEEN

Tu Apr 1 Cervantes' *Don Quijote*

Th Apr 3 Cervantes' *Don Quijote*

WEEK FOURTEEN

Tu Apr 8 Cervantes' *Don Quijote*

Th Apr 10 Presentations of Critical Works

WEEK FIFTEEN

Tu Apr 15 Presentations of Critical Works

Th Apr 17 Homer's *The Iliad*

WEEK SIXTEEN

Tu Apr 22 Homer's *The Iliad*; **FINAL EXAM ASSIGNMENTS HANDED OUT**

Th Apr 24 Homer's *The Iliad*

FINALS WEEK

Tuesday, April 29—FINAL EXAM—19:30 to 21:30