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ENG 2601-001: Backgrounds in Western Literature

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Course Description
This course is designed to provide an introduction to literary works considered central to the development of western literature. Writers throughout the centuries have responded to and incorporated aspects of works by their predecessors and their contemporaries into their own "new" creations. In this course we will especially explore various lines of artistic and topical influence that stretch from classical origins through literary works of the Renaissance. We will observe how ideas are adopted and adapted to suit the cultural and political times of the writers. Furthermore, we will discuss our own early twenty-first-century impressions of these works, addressing such questions as the following: What seems familiar or contemporary to us about these writers regarding their social milieus, their historical moments, and their texts? Why have these texts been so influential for so long? Why do they still fascinate? How should we, reading several of these texts in translation, think about the transitions they have gone through regarding the practices of translating and editing? Above all, by the end of the course you should have a greater understanding of the literary periods and genres of the western literary canon, as well as a sense of the historical shaping of some of your own ideas and values.

Policies
--The English Department statement on plagiarism stipulates that 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 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 assignment of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.
--Hand assignments in on time. If you're having problems, let me know. Papers more than two class days late without a university-approved excuse will not be accepted. If you miss an exam, and you have a university-approved excuse, you may make up that exam. You will have no more than one week to do so, and the make-up exam will be different
from the one given during class. All papers must be turned in in hard copy. No electronic submissions will be accepted.

--If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

--Be prepared for class. You'll get a lot more out of class discussions if you are participating in them, and I'll notice if you do not seem prepared to participate.

Requirements

--Three exams ..................... .45% (15% each of final grade)
--One 7-10 page research paper .......... 20%
--One research report with annotated bibliography ................ 15%
--Conference over rough draft ........... 5%
--One presentation ................... 15%

The three exams will cover the three units of study: the Ancient World, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, respectively; however, there may be interplay between these periods in our discussions and in the test questions.

The paper topic will be chosen from the assigned texts and issues related to them. I will give you a list of possible topics and/or areas of study to consider around mid-term because you will be expected to select a topic and begin research early on. The paper will be 7-10 pages long. You will use at least 3-5 outside sources to support your arguments, and they should consist of scholarly books, journal articles, and Internet sources of well-known scholarly repute (You may not use Wikipedia). You will use MLA Parenthetical Style, with a Works Cited page, for documentation. Also around midterm, you will have a preliminary research report with an annotated bibliography due to show the progress that you have made regarding your research project. At some point after that, you will also have a conference over a rough draft of the paper. Do not worry that we haven't covered the topic that interests you in class—this portion of our study is meant to be independent exploration of a topic that may be completely new to you. It is my hope that your independent study will augment for you what is eventually covered in class and will broaden the scope of the course as a whole for you. You, in turn, will share with the class what you have learned during your research near the end of the semester.

The research report and annotated bibliography will cover the research that you do for your research paper and presentation. The report will address the topic, why you chose the topic, and the avenues of research that you chose to explore. The annotated bibliography will consist of bibliographic citations of at least five sources with your notes on each work that describe the document, summarize why it may be useful to your project, and include possible quotations that you might use in the paper.

The conference over your rough draft will take place outside of class during my office hours and by appointment.
The presentation will be a 7-10 minute oral report over your research project, due near the end of the semester. After conducting your research, discussing your findings with me, and writing your paper, you will be able to present to the class what you have learned. The goal is to provide, via your and your fellow students’ reports, both a “big picture” look at the subjects we have covered over the course of the semester, as well as introduce specialized information that you have focused on during your own independent reading.

Tentative Schedule
Note: Readings may be shifted around during the semester to accommodate the class discussion.

_The Ancient World_
T. Aug. 21—Introduction to course. Read _Antigone_.
Th. Aug. 23—_Antigone_.
   Note: Always read your text's introduction to each author.

T. Aug. 28—_Antigone_. Read _Lysistrata_.
Th. Aug. 30—_Lysistrata_

T. Sept. 4—_Lysistrata_. Read _Medea_.
Th. Sept. 6—_Medea_

T. Sept. 11—_Medea_
Th. Sept. 13—Catch up on Greek dramas. Review for Exam I.

T. Sept. 18—Exam I. Read _Inferno_.

_The Middle Ages_
Th. Sept. 20—_Inferno_

T. Sept. 25—_Inferno_. Read _Decameron_.
Th. Sept. 27—_Decameron_.

T. Oct. 2—_Decameron_. Read _Sir Gawain_
Th. Oct. 4—_Sir Gawain_

T. Oct. 9—_Sir Gawain_. Read _Everyman_
Th. Oct. 11—_Everyman_.

T. Oct. 16—_Everyman_. Review for Exam II.
Th. Oct. 18—Exam II. Read Petrarch, Sonnet handout, and Shakespeare sonnets.

T. Oct. 23—Discuss papers/topics.
Thurs. Oct. 25—Work on Research Reports. Start reading _The Courtier_.

The Renaissance
Th. Nov. 1—The Courtier. Research Reports with annotated bibliographies are due. Read The Prince.

T. Nov. 6—The Prince. Read Aminta and La Mirtilla. (Note: Sign up for Conferences over Rough Drafts)
Th. Nov. 8—Aminta and La Mirtilla. Read A Midsummer Night's Dream.

T. Nov. 13—A Midsummer Night's Dream.
Th. Nov. 15—A Midsummer Night's Dream.

T. Nov. 20—Thanksgiving.
Th. Nov. 22—Thanksgiving

T. Nov. 27—Wrap-up Midsummer Night's Dream.
Th. Nov. 29—Oral presentations. Research papers are due.

T. Dec. 4—Oral presentations.
Th. Dec. 6—Oral presentations. Review for Exam III (Final).

Final Exam (Exam III): Wed., Dec. 12, 8:00-10:00am