Spring 1-15-1999

ENG 2601-003: Backgrounds of Western Literature

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In this class we will be reading some of the greatest works of European literature (originally written in languages other than English) up to and including the Renaissance in order to understand their role in the western historical, cultural, and literary heritage. We’ll read the writings of Homer, Aeschylus, Sappho, Sophocles, Virgil, Ovid, Boccaccio, Marguerite de Navarre, and Cervantes, among others, as we discuss divine and human beings, war and peace, love and betrayal, laughter and tears from 800 BCE to the early seventeenth century. Further, we’ll look at how these same issues influence our lives today and consider whether or not humankind has changed substantially in the last 3 millennia.

Required texts:

*The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*  
Homer, *The Iliad*  
Boccaccio, G. *The Decameron*  
Cervantes, M. *Don Quixote*

Grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>901-1000 pts. = A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Responses</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>801-900 pts. = B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>701-800 pts. = C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information for Students with Disabilities:  
If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accomodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Papers:  
There will be two short papers (3-5 pp). Topics may be chosen from a list I will provide to you at least 2 weeks before each paper is due. Or, you may, with my approval, write on a topic of your choice. Papers will be due March 11 and April 15. There will be a reduction in grade for an unexcused late paper. If you are having trouble with an assignment, please talk to me about it!

Reading:  
There is a lot of reading in this course, some selections easier than others. Thus, discipline will be rewarded and procrastination will get you into trouble. You will enjoy most of the selections, I hope; the issues they deal with are still relevant today. If I get the sense that many people have not done the reading, I will give pop quizzes. Anyone scoring less than 50% on such a quiz will have 10 points deducted from his or her course grade.
Short Responses:
You will be expected to write responses to your reading. I will pick these up on the days indicated on the syllabus and return them to you the next class. Each should be 1-2 pages typed, and each is worth 20 points. It is in your best interests to do these carefully, for they may be used during the essay portion of exams and they may form important preliminary steps in your paper writing process. Please see the "Guidelines for Short Responses" for further information.

Exams
There will be three exams, consisting of identification, short answer, and essay sections. The essay sections are opportunities for you to do some comparative work and synthesize what you have learned. If you are caught up on reading and have been thinking about what we've read and discussed, you will do fine on the exams.

Presentations:
Each of you will participate in a group presentation regarding the influence a particular author or work of literature has had on later works. The dates and topic of these presentations are listed on the syllabus.

Attendance:
I take attendance each class period, but there are no points assigned to attendance itself. Instead, you are allowed three absences with no questions asked. After that, each absence will mean a deduction in 25 points from your final course grade. For example, missing a total of 7 classes (3 1/2 weeks or over 20% of the classes!) will result in your course grade being reduced by a full grade. Of course, extended illnesses and emergencies will be accommodated, but I also expect you to use your three absences wisely. Don't skip class at the beginning of the semester and then expect me to be sympathetic later on if you get sick. You are responsible for taking care of your own absences: getting the notes from a classmate, getting any handouts and assignments from me. It is obviously in your best interest to attend class every time because you will always miss something if you do not.

Extra credit:
Whenever there are appropriate lectures or events on campus related to the subject matter of this course, I will let you know of them. Attending such events and writing a brief report will result in extra credit.

*** Course Objectives ***
--to learn to appreciate the "classics"--
--to define what we mean by "classic" literature--
--to understand how these texts provide an essential background for English and American lit.--
--to learn the origins of western literary genres--
--to learn how oral traditions form the basis for written literature--
--to learn the cultural and historical context for European literature through the Renaissance--
--to become more expert at writing and discussing literature--
--to enjoy--
**Syllabus**

(Reading Assignments are in italics and must be completed by the date they are listed; writing assignments; homework, etc. listed in bold on due date)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Quotation of the Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tu</strong> Jan 12</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>&quot;And God said, Let there be light, and there was light&quot; (Genesis 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Th</strong> Jan 14</td>
<td>The Old Testament, <em>Norton</em>, pp. 45-92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tu</strong> Jan 19</td>
<td>Homer, <em>The Iliad</em>, pp. 1-82</td>
<td>&quot;What god drove them to fight with such a fury?&quot; (Homer, <em>Iliad</em>, I, 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Th</strong> Jan 21</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tu</strong> Jan 26</td>
<td>Homer, <em>The Iliad</em>, pp. 83-331</td>
<td>&quot;My mother says I am his son: I know not / surely. Who has known his won engendering?&quot; (Homer, <em>Odyssey</em>, I, 252-53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Th</strong> Jan 28</td>
<td>Homer, <em>The Iliad</em>, pp. 332-402</td>
<td>&quot;Odysseus will not come to me; no ship / will be prepared for you. We have no master quick to receive and furnish out a guest / as Lord Odysseus was. Or did I dream him?&quot; (Homer, <em>Odyssey</em>, XIX, 341-344)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tu</strong> Feb 2</td>
<td>Homer, <em>The Iliad</em>, pp. 403-492</td>
<td>Presentation #1: Influence of Homer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Th Feb 11 Sappho
*Norton, 540-543*
Response 4 due
Presentation #2: Influence of Sappho

Quotation of the Week:
"I shall suffer no man, be he husband or lover / To approach me all hot and horny"
(Aristophanes. *Lysistrata*)

Tu Feb 16 Plato, Aristotle
*Norton, 806-834*

Th Feb 18 Sophocles. *Antigone. OR Oedipus Rex.*
OR Euripides. *Medea.*
*Norton, 701 ff. 658 ff. or 740 ff.*
Response 5 due

Quotation of the Week:
"The hour of departure has arrived, and we go out ways—I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows"  (Plato, *Apology of Socrates*)

Tu Feb 23 Aristophanes. *Lysistrata*
*Norton, 774 ff.*
Response 6 due
Presentation #3: Influence of Greek dramatists

Th Feb 25 EXAM I: Ancient Greece

Quotation of the Week:
"I sing of warfare and a man at war."
(Virgil, *Aeneid, I.1*)

Tu Mar 2 Virgil. *Aeneid*
*Norton, 841-916*

Th Mar 4 Virgil. *Aeneid*
Response 7 due

Quotation of the Week:
"Do majesty and love go well together / Or linger in one dwelling? Hardly."
(Ovid, *Metamorphoses, II*)

Tu Mar 9 Poetry by Catullus
*Norton, 835-840*

Th Mar 11 Ovid. *Metamorphoses.*
*Norton, 917-946*
Paper 1 due
Presentation #4: Influence of Ovid

*** SPRING BREAK *** NO CLASS ***
### Quotation of the Week:
"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other."
(Matthew 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Tu   | Mar 23  | Selections from the New Testament  
*Norton, pp. 947-960*                                                        |
| Th   | Mar 25  | St. Augustine, *Confessions*  
*Norton, pp. 980-1008*  
Presentation #5: Influence of Christian Texts |
| Tu   | Mar 30  | EXAM 2: Roman and Christian Literature                                    |
| Th   | Apr 1   | *Song of Roland*  
*Norton, 1159-1215*  
Response 8 due                                                      |
| Tu   | Apr 6   | Dante. *Inferno*  
*Norton, 1273 ff.*  
Response 9 due                                                 |
| Th   | Apr 8   | Dante. *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*  
*Norton, 1423 ff.*  
Petrarch, Sonnets  
*Norton, 1676-1679*                                           |
| Tu   | Apr 13  | Boccaccio. *Decameron.*  
Response 10 due                                             |
| Th   | Apr 15  | Marguerite de Navarre. *Heptameron.*  
*Norton, 1730-1749*  
Presentation #6: Influence of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio  
Paper 2 due |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Apr 20</td>
<td>Cervantes. <em>Don Quixote</em>. Readings to be arranged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Apr 22</td>
<td>Cervantes. <em>Don Quixote</em>. Readings to be arranged. Response 11 due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Apr 27</td>
<td>Cervantes. <em>Don Quixote</em>. Readings to be arranged. Presentation #7: Influence of Cervantes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Apr 29</td>
<td>Review Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>EXAM III: Comprehensive final 12:30-2:30</td>
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</tbody>
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