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ENG 3090-099: Literary Masterworks (Honors)

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ENGLISH 3090C—LITERARY MASTERWORKS (Honors)

Spring 1997
Section 99: MWF 1100-1150
Coleman 309

Dr. Zahlan
318E CH; tel: 581-6977
Office Hours: MW 1500-1700

COURSE OBJECTIVES

What are "Masterworks" and who says so? What is "Western Culture" and how did it get this way? As we read and enjoy canonized literary works of the European tradition—from Agamemnon to Heart of Darkness, we will address these questions. Analysing narratives and plays by Aeschylus, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Molière, Voltaire, Austen, Dostoevsky, and Conrad, we will reflect upon the relation of traditional culture to an increasingly diverse and (some say) post-literate world.

Eastern's General Education Core Curriculum is designed to develop in students nine "traits and abilities": Literacy; Reasoning Ability; Quantitative Analysis; Historical Consciousness; Scientific Awareness; Social Responsibility; Aesthetic Literacy; Multicultural Awareness; and, Intellectual Curiosity. This course will address at least six of the nine: as an upper-division course that meets requirements in Literature and Philosophy, "Literary Masterworks" will help advanced undergraduates develop knowledge of important works of literature and the Western cultural tradition. It will also encourage critical thought and intellectual questioning as to the goals of education and the nature of culture.

As we read the selection of "masterworks" assigned for the course, we will consider how they have contributed to the cultural heritage of educated Americans in the late twentieth century. Specifically, we should:

1. Improve our ability to read challenging texts critically and with enjoyment;
2. Improve our ability to respond critically to texts and to articulate our responses in constructive discussion;
3. Improve our ability to present ideas orally in a clear and interesting manner;
4. Increase both passive and active vocabulary;
5. Improve our ability to express ideas in writing;
6. Improve our ability to do library research and to locate and compile relevant information.
7. Broaden our knowledge of literature by reading/rereading a number of valuable works of poetry, drama, and fiction;
8. Broaden our knowledge of history and the "Western" cultural tradition;
9. Increase our understanding of the links between literary form and expression and culture;
10. Formulate a philosophy of education: what should an educated American know and what should he/she have read?
11. Establish a personal plan of reading and education;
12. 

TEXTS

Aeschylus, Agamemnon; Austen, Pride and Prejudice; Cervantes, Don Quixote;
Conrad, Heart of Darkness; Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment;
Molière, Tartuffe; Pearl Poet, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (Trans., ed. Stone);
Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part II; Voltaire, Candide;
Suggested: MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers
(Each student should also have a Handbook of usage and a collegiate desk dictionary.)
Class attendance, punctuality, preparation, and participation are expected and required. Unless it is otherwise indicated, works should be read by the first class period for which they are assigned according to the syllabus. Students are responsible for all material covered in class and all announcements or assignments made in class as well as for all assignments on the syllabus. Daily preparation and participation in class discussion are important and will count significantly in the final course grade.

ORAL REPORTS MUST BE PRESENTED ON THE ASSIGNED DATE. All students are expected and required to listen attentively to and be prepared to comment on the reports and presentations of their classmates. Failure to present reports on the assigned date will result in a grade of "O."

ALL PAPERS AND OTHER WRITTEN WORK must be handed in on the date due. BE SURE TO KEEP A COPY OF EVERY PAPER YOU HAND IN. IN THE CASE OF A MISSING PAPER, THE STUDENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPPLYING A COPY.

Bring test booklets to the Final Exams.

A NOTE ON THE PRESENTATION OF PAPERS: All papers and written assignments (other than those done in class) must be typed (double-spaced) on heavy or medium-weight white 9 x 11 paper. Computer print-outs are acceptable subject to the following stipulations: print must be dark (a new ribbon) and letter-quality or near-letter-quality; continuous-form sheets must be separated and edges removed; pages must be numbered and clipped or stapled together in order. There should be adequate margins. Each paper must have a separate title sheet that includes the title of the paper, course title, instructor's name, student's name, and date of submission. Repeat the title at the top of the first page of text. Papers must be stapled or clipped.

DOCUMENTATION: Use the MLA system to cite both primary and secondary sources used in your papers. Provide yourself with a copy of the most recent edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. Inform yourself of the conventions for documenting material taken from electronic media. Go to the Writing Center for advice.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All written work (papers, exams, tests, quizzes) must be original and independent. Please make sure that you understand the meaning of plagiarism and the policy of the English Department:

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 the grade of F for the course.

STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accomodations, please note that arrangements must be made through the Office of Disability Services; you should, therefore, contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6563) as soon as possible.

GRADE CALCULATION
Mid-Term Exam--10%; Oral Report-5%; Paper I =15%;
Paper II (including Prospectus) and Research Presentation--35%;
Cumulative Final Exam--15%;
Class Preparation and Participation (including quizzes)--20%
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ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

WEEK I

Monday, 13 Jan.: Introductions: Cultural Literacy and the Canon
Wednesday, 15 Jan.: Introductions continued: Course and Assignments
Begin Aeschylus, Agamemnon
Friday, 17 Jan.: Aeschylus, Agamemnon

WEEK II

Monday, 20 Jan.: King’s Birthday--no class meeting
Wednesday, 22 Jan.: Agamemnon continued; have play read by this date.
Sign up for Oral Reports
Friday, 24 Jan.: Conclude Agamemnon
Assignment of Paper I due 28 February
Assignment of Paper II due 28 April

WEEK III

Monday, 27 Jan.: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (Read text and introductory material.)
Wednesday, 29 Jan.: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
Friday, 31 Jan.: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
Reports: 1_________________________2_________________________

WEEK IV

Monday, 3 Feb.: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (concluded)
Cervantes, Don Quixote (Complete at least first ten chapters.)
Wednesday, 5 Feb.: Cervantes, Don Quixote (Complete at least first 20 chapters.)
Friday, 7 Feb.: Don Quixote (Read at least 30 chapters for this date.)

WEEK V

Monday, 10 Feb.: Don Quixote (Complete Part One for this date.)
Reports: 2______________________________________________________________3_________________________
Wednesday, 12 Feb.: Don Quixote (concluded)
Report 14:_____________________________
Friday, 14 Feb.: Lincoln’s Birthday--no class meeting

WEEK VI

Monday, 17 Feb.: Shakespeare, Henry IV, (Read Act I for this date.)
Wednesday, 19 Feb.: Henry IV, Part II (Have Acts I--III read for this date.)
Friday, 21 Feb.: Work on Paper I; continue reading Henry IV--no class meeting

WEEK VII

Monday, 24 Feb.: Henry IV, Part II (Have the play completed for today.)
Report 4______________________________________________________________________________5_________________________
Wednesday, 26 Feb.: Henry IV (concluded)
Report 15:_____________________________
Friday, 28 Feb.: Paper I due in class on this date--be prepared to share your paper with the class (Peer Evaluations).
WEEK VIII

Monday, March 3: **Mid-Term Exam**—Bring Test Booklets to class.
Wednesday, March 5: Molière, *Tartuffe* (Read Act I.)
Friday, March 7: Molière, *Tartuffe* (Have complete play read by this date.)

Reports: 6

WEEK IX

Monday, March 10: *Tartuffe* (concluded)

Wednesday, March 12: Voltaire, *Candide* (Read at least six chapters for today.)
Friday, March 14: Voltaire, *Candide* (Read (at least) 18 chapters for this date.)

SPRING BREAK

WEEK X

Monday, March 24: *Candide* (Have work completed for this date.)

*One-paragraph Prospectus of Paper II topic and approach—due in class on this date.*

Discussion of Paper I

Wednesday, March 26: *Candide* (concluded)

Reports: 8

Friday, March 28: Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Have at least ten chapters read.)

WEEK XI

Monday, March 31: Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Have at least thirty chapters read by this date.)

Schedule conferences for Week XII.

Wednesday, April 2: Work on Paper II; read *Pride and Prejudice*—no class meeting

Friday, April 4: Illinois Philological Association meeting at EIU—no class meeting (Attend conference session(s); work on Paper II; read *Pride and Prejudice.*)

WEEK XII

Monday, April 7: *Pride and Prejudice* (Have novel completed by this date.)

Reports: 10

Wednesday, April 9: *Pride and Prejudice* (concluded)

Report 16:

Friday, April 11: Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (Have Part One read for today.)

WEEK XIII

Monday, April 14: *Crime and Punishment* (Complete Parts One—Four for today.)

Wednesday, April 16: *Crime and Punishment* (Have novel ready for today.)

Reports: 12

Friday, April 18: *Crime and Punishment* (concluded)

Report 17:

Schedule documentation conferences for Weeks XIV and XV.

WEEK XIV

Monday, April 21: **RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS AS SCHEDULED**

Wednesday, April 23: **RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS AS SCHEDULED**

Friday, April 25: **RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS AS SCHEDULED**

WEEK XV

Monday, April 28: **PAPER II DUE IN CLASS**

Wednesday, April 30: **RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS AS SCHEDULED**

Friday, May 2: **RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS AS SCHEDULED**

CUMULATIVE FINAL EXAM:
ENGLISH 3090C: WRITTEN AND ORAL ASSIGNMENTS

I. JOURNAL: Each seminar participant should keep a notebook or journal in which both initial and considered responses to reading assignments and class discussion are regularly recorded. From time to time, you will be asked to write written responses in class, and you should insert them into your journal when they are returned. Additionally, you should keep a list of terms and other words to add to your vocabulary. I will not grade your journal—it is a tool for you to use in mastering the work of the course.

II. ORAL REPORT: During the semester, each student will prepare and present a formal oral report to the class. Reports should focus on some specific aspect of historical background, intellectual context, or theme and/or literary technique in one of the works assigned for the course. Reports should include interpretative reading of passages illustrative of the critical points made in the report. In the case of reports on dramatic works, students may combine forces for a dramatic reading of scenes from the play. Drama reports should include individual commentaries and a rehearsed reading of excerpts from the play (classmates may be asked to take minor roles as advised). Individual reports on narrative should be planned for 15 to 20 minutes; combined reports on drama should last 35 to 45 minutes total. Once you have signed up and studied the work you will report on, please consult with me about the specific approach you wish to take in your report. Be sure to time and practice your report. For commentaries, use notes on cards rather than sheets of paper; stand up straight, and make eye contact; For dramatic readings, be sure you are very familiar with the dialogue and its meaning, and then act. You may refer to secondary sources as you wish, but be sure to mention by name any sources that you use; be sure to communicate clearly to the class the source of all information and opinions. Reports must be given on the assigned date—no make-ups will be possible.

III. PAPER I (1100-1600 words/4 to 6 typed double-spaced pages) is due on Friday, 28 February: Paper I is an essay analysing specific characteristics that, in your view, have led to the lasting popularity and influence of a canonical European work included on the course syllabus. You may, if you choose, write on the work you have chosen for your oral report. Your essay should address the question of why this work has lasted through the centuries; consider which of its qualities, themes, concerns helped to shape our culture and how and why the work has proven influential. Please consult with me about the approach you take.

IV. PAPER II (2700--3300 words/10 to 12 typed double-spaced pages), due Monday, 28 April, is a researched study of a Nobel-Prize-winning author of your choice. The paper should address the issue of whether the Nobel Committee succeeded in choosing a writer whose works will prove lasting in the long term and why. Read several major works by the author you choose and consider whether they are likely to survive into the future, as compared to others and as considered in the context of place and time. Consider also whether and how the qualities, themes, concerns of the Nobel laureate's works have shaped or influenced Western culture. Paper II topics must be approved by me—please consult. A one-paragraph (polished and typed) prospectus is due in class on 24 April. DURING THE FINAL TWO WEEKS OF THE SEMESTER, EACH STUDENT WILL MAKE A FORMAL PRESENTATION BASED ON THE WORK OF THE RESEARCH PAPER.

V. IN ALL PAPERS: Formulate and develop a clear argumentative thesis and support critical observations with specific references to and quotations from the text(s) you discuss. As appropriate, refer to other literary works by the author you are discussing—or other authors; you may use historical background works, or works of literary theory or criticism. Be sure to quote accurately, indicate all quotes and paraphrases, and document carefully (using the MLA system). In making use of electronic media, please keep in mind that downloading should not be confused with research. Material from computer sources must be assimilated, processed, and documented as thoroughly as material from print media. ALL PAPERS must be typed or computer-printed; see Course Policies for requirements.