ENG 321: Backgrounds of Western Literature

Spring 2011
TR 10:30 - 11:45
Kuy 410

http://laulima.hawaii.edu

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and by appointment

Objectives
In this course we will read a range of ancient and medieval texts to get acquainted with some of the genres, myths, themes, and characters that influenced Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton and a host of other authors from the Middle Ages to the present day. The course will address the social, historical, and even technological issues that are crucial for understanding the various roles writing and reading have played in the consolidation and critique of European cultures. These materials will include The Epic of Gilgamesh (one of the earliest works of imaginative literature on record), selections from the Hebrew Bible and the Gospels, Homer’s The Odyssey, Sophocles’ Oedipus the King and Antigone, selections from Virgil’s Aeneid, selections from Ovid’s Metamorphoses, and poetry by Archilochus, Sappho, Catullus, and Horace. We will wrap up with an exploration of the sources of the King Arthur legend. The course will also give you a basic introduction to some central problems in literary research: establishing the text, relating the text to its historical context, dealing with translations, and discerning the strengths and limitations of our interpretive methodologies.

The format of the course will be primarily lecture with some class discussion and small-group activities. Semester grades will be determined based on in-class written responses to the readings, quizzes, two examinations during the semester and a final examination.

Required Texts (available at Revolution Books, 2626 South King St # 201, 944-3106)

Gilgamesh: A New English Version (Free Press, 2006); Homer, The Odyssey (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998); Sophocles, The Three Theban Plays (Penguin, 2000); Virgil, The Aeneid (Penguin, 2008); Lupak, Alan, The Oxford Guide to Arthurian Literature and Legend (Oxford UP, 2007). Other readings will be provided for you as downloadable files in the Resources section of our Laulima site.

You will also need a copy of the Bible, but I am not specifying one for you to buy. We will be comparing translations in class, so whatever version you can find will work.

Student Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course you should be able to

- identify major authors and literary works from the ancient world
- situate ancient texts in their historical and social contexts, accounting for formal, stylistic, thematic, and other relevant features in relation to these contexts
- identify key events in ancient history
- recognize key genres, myths, motifs, and characters Western literature has inherited from the ancient world
- identify and accurately employ basic concepts in literary theory
- write clear, coherent interpretive responses to literary texts
Assignments
Your grade will be based on your performance in the following assignments:

Two Examinations and a Final Examination
(100 points each, 300 points total)
The exams will have three sections:

1. A short-answer section (10 questions) that ask you to identify characters, events, and historical contexts related to the assigned texts, as well as terms from the study guides. (You will answer all the questions.)

2. Passage identifications and commentaries. You will be given short passages of text and will have to identify the text and author to which it belongs. You will also have to provide a short commentary on the significance of the passage to the work as a whole. (You will have a choice of questions to answer.)

3. An essay question. (You will have a choice of questions to answer.)

Eight Quizzes
(20 points each, 160 points total)

Quiz formats will vary. Some will be short-answer, others will ask you to identify and comment on passages, and others will be short-essay questions. In addition to testing your knowledge, these quizzes give you an opportunity to practice for the exams.

At the end of the term, I will drop your lowest quiz.

Six In-Class Responses to Assigned Reading
(10 points each; 60 points total)

These response assignments will not be announced in advance. At the start of class, I will ask you to write a paragraph responding to a question related to the assigned reading for that day. These unannounced writing assignments will encourage you to keep up with the reading.

Total class points (minus one quiz): 500

Policy
Grading
I will assign grades based on the +/- system. I will use the following minimum percentages:

A+ = 100%  A= 95%  A- = 90%
B+ = 87%  B = 83%  B- = 80%
C+ = 77%  C = 73%  C- = 70%
D+ = 67%  D = 63%  D- = 60%
F = 0.0%
You will not be allowed to make up quizzes or responses, regardless of your reasons for missing class. At the end of the term, I will drop the lowest of your six quizzes, so you can "afford" to miss the equivalent number of points (one quiz or two responses).

You may make up exams only in cases of documented illnesses and other serious conflicts. Make sure your travel plans for the summer don't conflict with the dates of our final exam.

In compliance with university policy, I will give incompletes only in cases of documented medical or family emergencies.

**Attendance**

You are required to attend class regularly and to arrive promptly. All absences are treated equally; missing more than 4 classes will lower your grade by one letter grade. If you miss 6 or more, you will fail the class. If circumstances arise that make it difficult for you to attend class or keep up with the reading assignments, please speak with me immediately. As time passes, it becomes harder to come up with a solution that is fair to you and to the rest of the students in the class. Don’t wait until the end of the semester, when it will be impossible to make accommodations.

**Conduct**

Your relationships with your classmates and with me are governed by the Student Conduct Code, which also applies in any the online environments we might be using this semester. I expect you to act in a professional and respectful manner in all of these settings. I also expect you to adhere to the UH Executive Policy on the Use and Management of Information Technology Resources. See the Laulima web site for this class for links to these documents.

If you feel that the conduct of another student in the class is interfering with your ability to work productively, please speak with me about the problem immediately. If you feel that my behavior is impairing your learning, speak with the Associate Chair of the Department of English in KUY 402.

**Scholastic Dishonesty**

The University of Hawai‘i regulations strictly forbid plagiarism and collusion. Submitting someone else’s work as your own, arranging for someone else to do your writing for you, purchasing papers, or cheating on exams will result in a failing grade for the course and may be reported to the Dean of Students.

**Access**

If you feel you need reasonable accommodations because of the impact of a disability, please contact the KOKUA Program at 956-7511 or 956-7612 in Room 013 of the QLCSS. You should also speak with me privately to discuss your specific needs. I am happy to work with you and the KOKUA Program to meet your access needs related to your documented disability.

**Schedule**

(subject to change)

Always complete the reading assignments by the day on which they’re listed in the schedule.

You can find all the online/downloadable materials in the folders for each week in the Laulima Resources. If I don’t give page numbers after the title of a text, you’re expected to read the whole thing by the day on which they’re listed.

**WEEK ONE**

January 11

Introduction to the class

January 13

*Gilgamesh*, Prologue - Book V
WEEK TWO
January 18 (last day to drop classes without a "W")
Gilgamesh, Books VI-XI

January 20
Genesis 1-10; 11-19
Quiz 1

WEEK THREE
January 25
Genesis 20-33

January 27
Genesis 37-50

WEEK FOUR
February 1
Exodus 1-20

February 3
Psalms 23, 42, 66, 67, 118, 130, 137
Quiz 2

WEEK FIVE
February 8
Introduction to Greek mythology and epic
selections from Ovid

February 10
Homer, The Odyssey 1-6

WEEK SIX
February 15
Homer, The Odyssey 7-12

February 17
Homer, The Odyssey 13-18
Quiz 3

WEEK SEVEN
February 22
Homer, The Odyssey 19-24

February 24
Exam One

WEEK EIGHT
March 1
Introduction to Greek poetry and drama
selections from Archilachos (Resources)
selections from Sappho (Resources)

March 3
Sophocles, Oedipus the King 159-196
WEEK NINE
March 8
Sophocles, Oedipus the King 197-251
   Quiz 4

March 10 (March 11 last day to drop classes with “W”)
Sophocles, Antigone 59-90

WEEK TEN
March 15
Sophocles, Antigone 91-128

March 17
Introduction to Roman literature
selections from Catullus
selections from Horace
   Quiz 5

WEEK ELEVEN
Spring Break

WEEK TWELVE
March 29
Virgil, Aeneid, Books 1-3

March 31
Virgil, Aeneid, Books 4-6
   Quiz 6

WEEK THIRTEEN
April 5
Virgil, Aeneid, Books 8 and 12

April 7
Exam Two

WEEK FOURTEEN
April 12
Matthew 1-15

April 14
Matthew 16-28
   Quiz 7

WEEK FIFTEEN
April 19
Lupack, 14-50; 83-122; 213-221

April 21
Lupack, 247-254; 329-364
   Quiz 8
WEEK SIXTEEN
April 26
Fuqua (dir.), King Arthur (film)

April 28
Fuqua (dir.), King Arthur (film)

May 3
wrap-up

FINAL EXAM (comprehensive)
Thursday, May 12, 9:45 - 11:45