

Course Syllabus
Western Literary Tradition

LIT 3300.001
Spring 2013

Tu/Th 1-2:15
JO 4.122

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hours: Tu 2:20-3:00 & by appt.
(*email is the best way to reach me.*)

Course Description

Western Literary Tradition is designed to introduce students to some major texts of the western canon and to explore the continuities that make a tradition. We will read works from the ancient, the medieval, and the early modern periods. Our focus will be twofold: first, what does this literary work tell us about its culture? How does it reflect and shape the values, beliefs, and customs of its time? Second, what are the text's qualities as a *poiesis* or "made thing"? What characterizes its language? What literary conventions does it utilize? How does it adapt and alter the literary tradition?

Required Texts

Any selection of texts from the western literary tradition can only hint at its richness. To help us see the continuities of the tradition, I have chosen texts that center on the theme "forbidden knowledge."

Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. Fagles (Penguin Classics)
Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, trans. Vellacott (Penguin Classics)
Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Fagles (Penguin Classics)
Dante, *The Inferno*, trans. Pinsky (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)
Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Kerrigan (Modern Library)
Goethe, *Faust, Part One*, trans. Luke (Oxford)
Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Penguin Classics)

Note: It is essential to use the designated translations.

Schedule**Prepare for discussion****Hand in***(hard copy only)*

Tu 1/15

Introduction

Th 1/17

Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*

Tu 1/22

Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*

Th 1/24

Aristotle, *Poetics* (selections)Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*

Tu 1/29

Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*

Th 1/31

Homer, *The Odyssey*, books 1-6**Book list**

Tu 2/5

Homer, books 7-12

Th 2/7

Homer, books 13-18

Tu 2/12

Homer, books 19-24

Review of Greek literature

Th 2/14

Dante, *The Inferno*, cantos 1-3

Tu 2/19

Dante, cantos 4-9

Th 2/21

Dante, cantos 10-15

Reading journal

Tu 2/26

Dante, cantos 16-21

Th 2/28

Dante, cantos 22-27

Tu 3/5

Dante, cantos 28-34

Th 3/7

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 1**Genre essay**

Spring break

	<u>Prepare for discussion</u>	<u>Hand in</u>
Tu 3/19	Milton, books 2-3	
Th 3/21	Milton, books 3-4	
Tu 3/26	Milton, books 5-6	Language essay & Research topic
Th 3/28	Milton, books 6-7	
Tu 4/2	Milton, books 8-9	
Th 4/4	Milton, books 9-10	
Tu 4/9	Milton, books 11-12	Research report
Th 4/11	Goethe, <i>Faust</i> , scenes 1-5	
Tu 4/16	Goethe, scenes 6-14	paper outline or draft (optional)
Th 4/18	Goethe, scenes 15-28	
Tu 4/23	Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , Author's Introduction, Preface, and Volume 1 (through chapter 5)	
Th 4/25	Shelley, vol. 1, cptr. 6 through vol. 2, cptr. 7	
Tu 4/30	Shelley, to end	Final paper
Th 5/2	Review	

Grading Policy. Your final grade will be based on the following:

Class participation: 25%

This will include:

Attendance. More than 3 absences will lower your grade.

Class discussion. You should aim to contribute at least one comment during each class period. For our purposes, the best comments highlight some “problem” in the text that needs to be explored **or** make connections between the day’s text and other texts, ideas, customs, or beliefs.

All electronic equipment must be turned off during class.

Quizzes: 25%

Every Tuesday, there will be a brief quiz on the reading for that day and on material covered in the *two previous* weeks. These will be graded on a 1-10 scale. *Hold on to these.* At the end of the semester, you will hand in your best 10 quizzes, along with a cover page describing your learning over the course of the semester.

Formal writing: 50%

You will write a series of papers on a text of your own choosing (subject to my approval). The text you choose must be an epic, a major novel, or a tragedy, must use difficult language, and must deal with traditional themes such as hubris or fate and free will. It may be a text you’ve read before or one you’re reading for the first time.

1. A reading journal of ideas and reactions to the text *as you are reading it*
2. A 3-page essay on how your text’s author used and modified a traditional genre
3. A 3-page essay on the language of your text
4. A summary (3-4 pages) of scholarly research on one issue in your text
5. A formal argument (7 pages) utilizing material from your earlier papers.
(This will count twice as much as the other assignments.)

There will not be a final exam for this course.

***This course will adhere to all UTD policies and procedures.
Syllabus subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.***