

Modern European Literature
Pless
2017-2018

“In reading great literature, I become a thousand men and yet remain myself... Here, as in worship, in love, in moral actions, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do.”

C.S. Lewis, from *An Experiment in Criticism*

Course description

This class presents students with significant texts from the story of modern Europe (primarily Great Britain). It is my hope that limiting our scope in this way will allow us to go deeper in our understanding of these authors and their texts. Reading these texts will invite us to think critically about the modern culture we inherit from them. As seniors, I expect students to generate this class with their comments, questions, and claims. Thus, our class will be heavy in harkness discussions and papers. I hope that such a student-generated class will cultivate a greater enjoyment and retention of the big ideas in these books. This class will hone and refine their skills in critical thinking, communication, writing, and reading comprehension. Our largest hope is that students will leave this study of words with a deeper love for God who is himself the Word.

Primary texts

A Tale of Two Cities (Summer Reading)

Selections from *Echoes of Eden* by Jerram Barrs (Summer Reading)

Paradise Lost by John Milton

Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Songs of Innocence and of Experience by William Blake

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

Dubliners by James Joyce

Lord of the Flies by William Golding

Essential questions/themes

Why do we read? What does it mean to be human?

How has literature shifted over the course of modern history? (Milton's epic spiritual poetry to Joyce's modernism)

Understanding evil: what does it mean to be fallen and to live in a fallen world?

Knowledge: what is the role of knowledge in human life? Is knowledge a gift, a path to the divine? A dangerous tool for control that leads to destruction?

Monstrosity: who/what is a monster? Why do humans have this concept of monstrosity?

Coming of age/maturity: what does it mean to grow up?

Grading

This course will use a true point system as listed below:

Quarter 1 (250)

Summer Reading Paper (100)

Other: Harkness discussions, regular reading comprehension quizzes, journal completion (150)

Quarter 2 (350)

Paradise Lost Paper (150)

Hamlet Adaptation Assignment (100)

Other: Harkness discussions, regular reading comprehension quizzes, journal completion (100)

Quarter 3 (350)

Blake Poetry Assignment (100)

Frankenstein Paper (150)

Other: Harkness discussions, regular reading comprehension quizzes, journal completion (100)

Quarter 4 (350)

Personal Essay (100)

Lord of the Flies test (150)

Other: Harkness discussions, regular reading comprehension quizzes, journal completion (100)

If you have a 90 or above (A) average in the second semester in this class, you will be allowed to exempt the final exam in this class.

Homework

In order to maximize our class time, I will require students to complete some of the reading and writing outside of class. However, I hope to provide some class time to begin this work. Students can expect regular reading homework and more work during weeks when a major writing assignment is due. Please speak with me if the homework load becomes unbearable; I will do all I can to keep it manageable.

Plagiarism and academic honesty

The MLA Handbook notes that the word plagiarism comes from the Latin word for kidnapper (“plagiarius”). Plagiarism refers to the act of kidnapping of another person’s words or ideas and then disguising them as your own. Students must proactively work to avoid plagiarism. To avoid plagiarism, you must be careful to follow citation rules especially when producing academic writing (for example the papers you will often write in this class). We will follow the MLA Handbook’s guidelines for citations. Plagiarism will typically result in a zero on the assignment in addition to any other consequences that the administration deems necessary. As you consider moving on to the college level next year or later, remember that committing plagiarism will have severe consequences. Please talk to me if you have any questions about this.

Regarding honesty in the classroom, the same principle applies. Do not “kidnap” your fellow student’s knowledge of books and pass it off as your own. When you put your name on a test, quiz, or paper in my class, you are implying that the comprehension of the material communicated therein is your own. Please talk to me if you have concerns or questions about this.

Remember, there is a definite difference between allowing others to shape your opinions and stealing others’ opinions. The former is necessary for this class; the latter is dishonest.

Absences/late work

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to communicate with me and/or your fellow students in order to keep up. If you do not speak to me within one week of the classes you miss and you miss minor grades like quizzes or discussions, I will enter 0 points into RenWeb for those assignments.

For every school day that a paper is late, I will deduct 11% from the final grade.

Behavior

This class requires a great deal of conversation. The most important rule is that you love your neighbor by listening whenever another person is speaking, whether that person is myself or your fellow student. Please seek peace with others by taking any conflicts directly to the person involved rather than talking about conflicts with others.