

Introduction

Lit 3101.001 Literature of the Western World I

Fall 1998; Tuesday and Thursday 9:30 to 10:45 am; CPR-337

Course Statement

This course explores the genesis of western literary tradition, and its development through the Renaissance. We will focus on textual studies of the major genres of this period, epic and tragedy, and how those genres influenced later literary works. We will study the these works' continuing contemporary relevance and influence on the history of Continental, British, and American literature, other literary traditions, and the arts in general. Major works covered will include *Gilgamesh*, The Old Testament (excerpts), the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, and works by Sophocles, Ovid, and Dante, among others. Since any survey course has much more literature than one semester-long class can cover, we will attempt to cover only a couple works *very* well, rather than many works only cursorily. Also, this course will *not* address the pertinent British literature of this time; *Beowulf*, *Gawain*, and Chaucer should be studied in your British literature surveys.

Course Goals

1. To develop and enrich the students' knowledge of early western literature, its cultural, intellectual, philosophical, educational, socio-political-historical contexts, its continuing contemporary relevance, and its influence on the history of British and American literature, other literature, and the arts.
2. To develop and enhance the students' critical and analytical ability to read and understand the literature of these writers, their contexts and significance, through and variety of pedagogical strategies.
3. To develop and enhance the students' ability to think critically and creatively and to write and to speak effectively about literature.
4. To develop an expanded and enlightened vision as to meaningful critical approaches to these writers and the western literary culture based on specific study of literary production and on a broad understanding of their significance to contemporary and later intellectual thought.
5. To develop an appreciation for the diversity of ideals, values, perceptions, and expectations, exemplified not only within the texts of these writers and the societies reflected in their works, but also as represented by the course participants.

This course is beneficial for students wishing to enrich and deepen their knowledge of early western literature and how it influenced subsequent literary and cultural thought. It will be valuable for students with a variety of general and specific interests, e.g., literary and cultural contexts; so-

cial, educational, religious, political, philosophical, and intellectual history; generic development of various types of literature. This course is also essential for prospective teachers of English and American literature. This course will require *active* student involvement, close consideration of the primary texts, the compilation of a portfolio which meets the course standards and requirements, and the fulfillment of all other requirements as specified on the syllabus and under course policies.

Active Learning

Our study will attempt to emphasize creating a supportive classroom climate for active learning through a positive group building process. Since active learning is student orientated and may appear to involve risk-taking, the course will focus on establishing trust, confidence, and respect between the professor and students and among the students. To advance this climate and encourage the positive outcomes and benefactors of risk-taking, I will be clear, organized, current, and well-prepared, but flexible and personal. I will minimize the pain of student error making by separating learning from evaluating, and I will provide graduated and individualized risk-taking opportunities that will make learning worthwhile and exciting. Students will participate in this cooperative effort to build a supportive classroom atmosphere by coming to class on time and prepared with thoughtfully completed reading/writing assignments, by asking pertinent questions and sharing experiences and viewpoints, by reaching out personally to the professor and other students, by showing cooperation and respect, and providing positive feedback to the professor and peers.

Projected Outcome

The projected outcome of this course is that, based on an enhanced knowledge of western literature's progenitors and a broad understanding of their cultural contexts and subsequent importance, an expanded and enlightened vision will emerge as to meaningful approaches to early western literary discourse and tradition. Moreover, the course subject and approach is intended to

- Nurture a general love for learning
- Empower students with positive sense of competency and skill
- Encourage a curious, investigative spirit and creative, independent thinking
- Foster a deepened and expanded understanding and appreciation of literature as a humanistic discipline