

READINGS IN THE WESTERN TRADITION

Fall Semester, 2019-2020 | Dr. Olga Kuminova

Class: Mondays 10:00 – 12:00 | Required First Year BA Course | 2 points

Office hours: Room 522, Building 74 | Monday 12-14:00 (or by appointment)

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This course familiarizes the students with some of the major canonical texts of the Western literary and cultural tradition, which comprise an indispensable background for studying English and American, as well as other Western literatures (including Hebrew literature). We will identify enduring themes, characters and plots from their first known appearance through modern poetry, prose and scholarship. These threads include the Trojan War, the stories of Odysseus and Aeneas, creation myths, and the basic generic structure of epic vs. lyrical vs. dramatic poetry.

The purpose of the course is to prepare the students for analyzing Western literature in the context of its tradition and to recognize influences and transformations of the shared early canon.

Keywords: Greek mythology, *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Bacchae*, Plato, Aristotle, *Aeneid*, New Testament

Week #, Date	Topics	Related Transformative Poem/ Short Prose Piece	Homework for next class
Week 1 Oct 15	Intro, Greek mythology		
Week 2 Oct 22	Mythology; Homer, <i>The Iliad</i>	Marlowe, fragment from <i>Doctor Faustus</i>	Short mythology assignment given
Week 3 Oct 29	Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i>	Tennyson, "Ulysses"	
Week 4 Nov 5	Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i>	Kafka, "The Sirens"	Short mythology assignment due
Week 5 Nov 12	Euripides, <i>The Bacchae</i>	Nietsche, fragment from "The Birth of Tragedy"	
Week 6 Nov 19	Aristotle, <i>The Poetics</i>		
Weeks 7 Nov 26	Plato		Midterm assignment given
Week 8 Dec 3	Virgil, <i>The Aeneid</i>	St. Augustine, fragment from <i>Confessions</i>	
Week 9 Dec 10	Virgil, <i>The Aeneid</i>		Midterm assignment due
Week 10 Dec 17	New Testament		
Week 11 Dec 24	New Testament	T.S. Eliot, "Journey of the Magi"	
Week 12 Dec 31	New Testament	Jorge Luis Borges, "Three Versions of Judas"	

Course Requirements:

Attending at least 80% of the classes	
Short mythology assignment	15%
Midterm take-home assignment	25%
Final exam	60%