

## ROOTS OF THE WESTERN LITERARY TRADITION

Fall Semester, 2019-2020 | Dr. Olga Kuminova

Class: Mondays 12:00 – 14:00 | Required First Year BA Course | 2 points

Office hours: Room 515 or online | Monday 16-18:00 (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 literature in the context of its tradition and to recognize influences and transformations of the shared early canon.

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

Week #, Date	Topics	Related Transformative Poem/ Short Prose Piece
Week 1	Intro, Greek mythology	
Week 2	Mythology; Homer, <i>The Iliad</i>	Marlowe, fragment from <i>Doctor Faustus</i>
Week 3	Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i>	Tennyson, "Ulysses"
Week 4	Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i>	Kafka, "The Sirens"
Week 5	Euripides, <i>The Bacchae</i>	Nietzsche, fragment from "The Birth of Tragedy"
Week 6	Aristotle, <i>The Poetics</i>	
Weeks 7	Plato	
Week 8	Virgil, <i>The Aeneid</i>	St. Augustine, fragment from <i>Confessions</i>
Week 9	Virgil, <i>The Aeneid</i>	
Week 10	New Testament	
Week 11	New Testament	T.S. Eliot, "Journey of the Magi"
Week 12	New Testament	Jorge Luis Borges, "Three Versions of Judas"
Week 13	Review Class	

**Course Requirements:**

Attending at least 80% of the classes	
Informal written assignment	10%
Midterm take-home assignment	20%
Short mythology essay	20%
Final exam (or take-home assignment)	50%