

Roots of the Western Literary Tradition

Fall Semester, 2023-2024

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Mondays 12:15-13:45
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Course Description:

This course is devoted to some of the foundational texts of Western culture, offering both a rich source of social, historical and philosophical conceptions, and indispensable background for literary studies. We will thus analyze the key genres, forms, themes and ideas underlying not only these texts, but many of our modern notions and artistic creations. The course will focus on ancient mythology, Greek poetry and philosophy, Roman poetry, and the Bible in both its Hebrew and Christian manifestations.

Commitments:

Attendance (up to 2 absences allowed for the semester)
Contribution – 10%
Study Questions – 10%
Two short assignments (~1 page) – 30%
Final paper (~2 pages) – 50%

I ask that you come to class, read the assigned texts based on the syllabus, contribute your own thoughts, and share your insights and challenges. It is also important that you submit answers to the study questions (on Moodle) before each class and submit the two written assignments, all of which will help sharpen your analytical skills and understanding, as well as offer practice for the final paper.

You may use a computer/tablet in class. The use of electronics for matters unrelated to class, however, besides being counterproductive and disrespectful, will affect your grade. At times, for purposes of discussion, I will ask that all electronics be put away.

Phones are not allowed in class! If you have pressing matters, please let me know before class and then feel free go outside to text/talk on the phone.

****Students in reserve duty (Milluim) will be offered alternative times and/or evaluations****
In general, these are difficult time, so if you have any problems, please let me know or come talk to me! The sooner difficulties – of whatever kind – are addressed, the easier these are to mitigate.

Course Syllabus:

Introduction: between history and myth
Book of Genesis, *The Hebrew Bible*

Part I – Ancient Greece

Ancient Greek Cosmology
Hesiod, *Theogony* and *Works and Days*

The Trojan War
Homer, *The Iliad*

The culture of the Bronze Age
The Iliad (cont.)

A hero's journey
Homer, *The Odyssey*

assignment 1 – due 12/2

Part II – Greek Philosophy

The Socratic dialogue
Plato, *The Symposium*

The art of living
Plato, *The Republic*

Part III – Ancient Rome

The founding of Rome
Vergil, *the Aeneid*

Cultural transformations
Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*

The Beginning of a new era
The Gospel according to Matthew, *The Holy Bible*

Assignment 2 – due 11/3

Final paper – due 22/4