

Course Syllabus

Spring 2020

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College of Liberal Arts & Behavioral Sciences, Department of English

ENG 230

World Literature I

T,TH 5:30-6:45, Rm 311

English 230 is a survey of World Literature from ancient times through the Renaissance. Students are expected to read and critically analyze literary texts which influenced Western culture, including portions of the *Iliad*, the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, selections from early and late medieval writers, and selected works of Shakespeare and Milton. In this class, we will be discussing a variety of themes and concepts, some literary, some cultural and some religious, such as the idea of the divine and the sacred in literature, the concepts of sin and immortality, the role of the irrational / madness, the Fall of Man, medieval “contemptus mundi” and notion of courtly love, and Renaissance *melancholia*. We can be somewhat flexible and explore the interests of the class.



ENG 230 is also an introduction to scholarly research and writing. By the end of the semester, students will demonstrate competency with academic writing, specifically formulating and supporting an original thesis, writing in an impersonal and objective manner, and using appropriate references drawn from primary and secondary sources. Because this is both a literature survey and scholarly research/writing class, your grade will be comprised mostly from papers, but there will be a midterm and final exam as well. *Papers may be revised for a better grade until the end of the semester.*

Recommended Texts for World Literature:

The Norton Anthology of Western Literature, 9th Edition: Volume I. Eds. Martin Puchner et al. New York: W.W. Norton, 2014.

It is not necessary to buy the textbook. Much of what we read can be found in good translation online or in good critical editions which will give you more of the text and more insight than the NA. Please note, however, that the translation of the *Iliad* by Stanley Lombardo in the NA, and the selections in the NA for both the *Iliad* and *Paradise Lost*, are the ones I will be referring to in class discussion. Lombardo’s translation is NOT available in ebook format through the library (I tried to get it). You can buy it in print on Amazon for < \$15 or access it online for a fee through Chegg.com. I highly recommend this version.

We will be reading a more of the Bible (OT and NT) than what is in the Norton Anthology. A study Bible will be helpful. A study Bible is one with *glosses* or annotations on the text. I use *The New English Bible with Apocrypha* (NEB), but often bounce to a traditional King James (KJV) to get more of a literary flavor--old English “thees” and “thous.” The NIV is the most popular among Protestants. Catholic vs Protestant Bibles differ! Just saying there are different authoritative translations for different faith traditions. I will not tell you which to use. For all other readings, there are good texts available online. I link to them in the Supplemental Materials (SM) folder.

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Submission Format: All papers must be typed in standard fonts (Calibri 11, Arial or Times New Roman 12-point type) and double-spaced. The **Modern Language Association** (MLA) style format must be followed for all submissions. Work must be submitted in either a Word (.docx) or PDF file format. Apple .pages are not able to be opened in Blackboard and must be converted to Word or PDF prior to submission!

Sample MLA-formatted papers and MLA cheat sheets have been placed in Blackboard under Supplemental Materials (SM). I print out papers to grade them, so last name and page number are helpful. If you do not know how to add a header, simply Google "MLA header in Word" for instructions.

Also note, per me and MLA, **all papers must have a meaningful title (not Assignment I, Iliad paper, etc.)**. Nameless, untitled papers do not make a good impression. Also, I would encourage each of you to have someone else PROOFREAD your papers before submitting them.

MLA Citation Format: For all citations, please include the URLs to your sources even if they look ugly. MLA format also requires the link. For more information on MLA and URLs to electronic resources, see the [Purdue Owl MLA site](#).

Journal article from JSTOR database:

Beidelman, T. O. "Agonistic Exchange: Homeric Reciprocity and the Heritage of Simmel and Mauss." *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1989, pp. 227–259. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/656460.

ebook from EBSCO ebooks database:

Wilson, Donna F. *Ransom, Revenge, and Heroic Identity in the Iliad*. Cambridge University Press, 2002. EBSCOhost, tsuhelweb.tsu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=78341&site=ehost-live.

Please make sure your references in the Works Cited page correspond to the citations in the body of your papers. For example, the **in text citation** for Donna Wilson's book, page 38, would be like this (Wilson 38).

Sources: For papers, please use only scholarly sources. Scholarly sources mean articles published in scholarly journals AND books (including ebooks) published by university presses. Duke University Press, Oxford, Cambridge, NYU are examples of academic or scholarly publishers. The library's databases contain these. Note that [JSTOR](#) is an excellent database to locate scholarly articles on classical and literary works, as are our scholarly ebook databases such as [ProQuest ebook Central](#).

All papers and assignment must be submitted electronically through Blackboard. For each assignment, I will be creating a drop box in Blackboard. When submitting work, please follow the following naming convention for files: LastnameFirstname_Assignment#. Running headers with page numbers are appreciated.

Grading Opportunities: Your grade will be comprised of four writing assignments, a midterm and a final. The four writing assignments are explained in detail in Blackboard. They are as follows:

- **Short, scholarly essay** (*Iliad paper, 5 pages, plus a Works Cited page*). You must formulate a thesis and argue the thesis with evidence from the text and at least one scholarly source, citing these according to MLA style.
- **Bibliographic Scavenger Hunt.** Find and cite scholarly articles and ebooks on specific aspects of the Hebrew Bible using the library's online resources. Write abstracts for three of them.
- **Literature Review:** Review the scholarly literature on *one aspect of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, but in the end tell me at the end what you think and why. Or else you can select one scholarly interpretation of SGGK and react to it. Your choice.

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- **Extended Scholarly Research Paper.** Anything that interests you based on readings/topics! Your choice. People usually write about *Hamlet* or *Milton*, but others prefer to compare two or more works (*Iliad* and *OT*), or write about themes that run across several works (e.g., melancholia in *Hamlet* and *Il Penseroso*). **You can start on this paper whenever you like!**

***Papers may be turned in early for review; they also may also be continuously revised for a better grade until the end of class. *If you absolutely need more time to do your best work on a paper, please let me know. I want you to turn in work you are proud of!*

The midterm and final exams are drawn entirely from course notes, announcements, discussion posts and supplemental readings. For the midterm and final, I will be testing you on content and terminology, not on your ability to write. This way those who do not write well but work hard can still make a good grade on the midterm and final. You will have one week to complete the midterm and final, and you may work with others, but you *may not copy/paste answers from the Internet*. Plagiarism will lead to a grade of "0".

Your overall course grade will be computed according to the following breakdown:

| Assignment | Weight |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Three short writing assignments | 45% |
| Midterm Examination | 20% |
| Research Essay 8 pages | 15% |
| Final Examination | 20% |
| TOTAL | 100% |

| Grading Standards | Range |
|-------------------------|---------|
| Letter grade: A+ | 96 -100 |
| Letter grade: A | 95-93 |
| Letter grade: A- | 92-90 |
| Letter grade: B+ | 89-86 |
| Letter grade: B | 85-83 |
| Letter grade: B- | 82-80 |
| Letter grade: C+ | 79-76 |
| Letter grade: C | 75-73 |
| Letter grade: C- | 72-70 |
| Letter grade: D+ | 69-66 |
| Letter grade: D | 65-63 |
| Letter grade: D- | 62-60 |
| Letter grade: F | 59-0 |

*Refer to the student handbooks and departmental standards for minimal acceptance for passing grade.

Conference(s): I am available to meet with students in person at any time that is convenient for you. I work in the library—come see me! I also respond to email quickly. If you have a question please do not hesitate to email me: emily.tuck@tsu.edu.

Blackboard Course Structure:

Course Content: This folder contains class lecture notes. These documents were generated to help me prepare for lectures. Please review relevant course content each week.

Supplemental Materials: These contain videos, articles and ebooks which will help you write papers or reinforce concepts mentioned in class. *In some cases, articles in the Supplemental Materials folder are assigned. Please peruse them.* These supplemental materials will help you with paper topics, find articles for topics, and obtain a greater understanding of the readings.

Assignments: This is where you will find complete and detailed descriptions of assignments and also where you will go to upload your papers. Uploaded papers will be checked for plagiarism.

Plagiarism: Copy/pasting someone else's work or ideas without giving them credit is plagiarism. Plagiarism is not tolerated in my class. It is *not* plagiarism, however, to ask a friend, family member or fellow student to proofread your papers for good English before turning them in!

Student Accessibility Services Office: Individuals with diagnosed disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to access and participation in University programs, services, and activities through the provision of accommodations and advocacy. In order to determine eligibility for services, SASO requires complete and current diagnosis specific documentation. Student Health Center Room 140, (713)-313-4210.

Schedule of Course Lectures and Readings

Jan 14 Introduction to the Literature of the Ancient World

What is "oral literature"? Most of what we read in World Lit I was composed in a *pre-literate* society, meaning audiences could not have read it. It was meant to be performed/heard, and experienced in the moment, rather than plumbed for deep meaning—reading and rereading--as we tend to approach literature. It was often passed down orally in the form of song before being written down, or *codified*. It was also often repetitious (at time, to add suspense); stock phrases may have helped the poet remember lines or create new lyrics on the spot. Poets, priests and *rhapsodes* preserved sacred history in pre-literate societies. In Homeric and Ancient Greece, poets were powerful bearers of communal memory, sacred history and laws, as well as providing entertainment. The *Iliad* as an example of oral literature. It is literature informed by qualities of speech and oral delivery, called **orality** (Ong).

Late Bronze Age Collapse (BAC) and the Fall of Troy (aka *Ilios* -> *Iliad*). The Greek Dark Ages—after the collapse of the vast Mycenaean Empire—the Greek-speaking people lost the ability to write. There was also a return to pastoralism, as urban centers collapsed or became depopulated; trade stopped, long stable society of interconnected palace cities fell apart. This is referred to as the "Greek Dark Ages." Return to writing due to the reintroduction of writing by way of the Phoenicians (same as the Biblical Canaanites), a Semitic people who gave the Greeks a phonic alphabet. Homer or a scribe (myth has it that Homer was blind) wrote the *Iliad* with this new alphabet.

The Trojan War in the *Iliad* is referring to an event which occurred at the end of the Bronze Age (note frequent references to Bronze in Homer), but was it was first written down in the Iron Age. The stories were rooted in a real socioeconomic event, a violent collapse of many great ancient cities and empires. Living in the ruins, the people imagined a great war occurred involving the wrath of gods and semi-divine heroes. They had no other way to account for the devastation they saw at Troy and the surrounding area, which was close to where Homer lived.

A similar collapse occurred in Egypt/Palestine resulting in a collapse of Canaanite cities and Egyptian empire, and led the rise of Israelites. Their book is the Hebrew Bible, and the Exodus story told in the first five books of the Bible, is the story of the rise of Israelites from the beginning of creation through trials and battles, with God for them and other times against them (sending plague and punishment). Similar to Zeus in the *Iliad*, the God of the OT is encouraging battle and widespread destruction. Like the *Iliad*, this text is also believed to be the product of an earlier oral tradition, recounting stories and some historical events which date to the Bronze Age. Similar to the *Iliad*, the oldest part of the Bible were recorded in the early Iron Age, with parts referring back to the Bronze Age.

Today many speculate that we are entering into a new oral culture (called "secondary orality"), a *post-literate* society. Hi-tech, low literacy. Some say we are in a **twilight of books**, a waning of print culture, entering a new Dark Ages as a result of digital media/video. Of course, people may not be reading as

many novels or newspapers or books of poetry, but reading shorter essays and stories online, consuming news online, and listening to music. Arguably, song lyrics are modern day poetry. . . just as early literature was all once recited or sung.

At any rate, the factual Bronze Age Collapse provides the backdrop for both the story of the *Iliad* and probably the Exodus story. We will discuss that this later.

You may want to watch at least the first part of the YouTube video on the Bronze Age collapse in the SM folder. *You will be intrigued. We will encounter it again with the OT and archeological explanations of Exodus. Ancient Egypt also went down with the BAC!*

Read selections from the *Iliad*. See above for text version information. You don't have to read the whole thing! Just the assigned books (*What is in the NA*): I, VI (lines 116-560), IX, XVI (455-906), XVIII (to 661), XXII (to 575), XXIV. Please try to get through Book I as soon as possible. Also note, a book is more like a chapter; it was actually a scroll. They didn't have books.

****When you read the *Iliad*, **note whenever someone or a god is angry and whenever anger is appeased.** Anger/wrath and "propitiation" (appeasement) of anger drive much of the plot in the *Iliad*.

Read Course Notes: Lecture 1 -- Introduction to the Literature of the Ancient World.

Jan 16 Introduction to the *Iliad* and to Homeric Norms

"The Bible of the Ancient World." From story to sacred text. Historicity ("historical authenticity") of the Trojan War in the *Iliad*. Excavations of Troy.

The story of the Trojan War was a **Founding Myth** for the Greeks . . . and the Romans . . . and later the British (Chronicles of Britain and Arthurian legends trace the lineage of Brutus--the first king of Britain--back to Troy). Ancient Ethiopians were also at Troy under Prince Memnon. The *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and Greek Epic Cycle, contain the oldest references in Western literature to Black people. The Gods go to "Aethiopia" for a vacation.

Bronze age cultural norms. The Bronze Age was an **aristocratic warrior** society where the deeds of heroes were rewarded with tribute (war spoils) and immortalized in song . . . a song just like the *Iliad*. Gift-giving and gift exchange, sometimes called "Agonistic Exchange" or "Homeric reciprocity," is very important to Homeric Greeks. Their gods seem to operate along the same rules: gifts obligate others to help you. The gifts you receive establish your social status, your glory.

- The Greek heroes in the *Iliad* may seem to us to be materialistic, obsessed with **gifts** and **ransom**. But in their society, **gifts and ransom => honor** ("time" - "timmay"). Gifts established or symbolized social status / standing. It has symbolic value.

Speaking of gifts, the famed **Trojan Horse**, which was supposed to be a gift given by the Greeks to the Trojans (but was a ploy to get inside the walls), does not appear in the *Iliad*. It is recounted in a story in the *Odyssey* explaining how Troy fell. Also, in Homer, Achilles is mortal and does not have a special heel. That story about being held by the heel and dipped in the River Styx by his mother comes from later myth about Achilles.

- **Kleos, glory.** "Kleos" is more specifically *your renown or reputation, what people hear about you*, or fame. Glory is being immortalized in song so you are remembered among the living.

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- In Greek literature and art, women don't seem to *mind* being abducted, especially by great or powerful men / gods. They seem to go willingly, although Helen regrets her choice to go with Paris. If you were to read the whole of the *Iliad* you discover that Briseus wants to marry Achilles—didn't he kill her whole family? Abduction of women is a common theme in Classical literature and art in general. Zeus is famous for abducting women in a variety of seductive forms, including as shower of gold coins, very beautiful white bull and a swan.
- **Blood ransom/blood price**, a price attached to a human life usually to settle a dispute over murder, manslaughter, abduction. It is compensation to the family to prevent vengeance. This is in the Old Testament too, it is not just a Homeric Greek concept. You will see references to ransom and blood money throughout this text.

Please read the rest of the Iliad assignment this weekend, or at least as much as you can! Take notes or mark in your book. This is the longest reading assignment you will have in this class but we will be on the Iliad for a while.

Start thinking about paper topics.

Read: Try to read the rest of the *Iliad* assignment, above.

Lecture 2—Introduction to the *Iliad* and Homeric Norms.

Check out the Supplemental Materials for the *Iliad*, including the video (might show in class) by Classicist Erwin Cook about the Homeric Greeks, "The Cultural Relevance of the *Iliad*."

Jan21 The *Iliad* as a Sacred Text: Epic Battle involving the Divine and Man.

Important! How to use the library's electronic databases to find and cite scholarly articles.

Epic Cycle. The EC was a prequel to the *Iliad*. It survives only in fragments and myths. Secret and strange connection between Zeus and Thetis, Achilles's mother. **Wedding of Pelius and Thetis.** Marriage to a mortal was forced upon Thetis by Zeus, as well as her "bedding," in order to avoid a prophecy that the child of Thetis and god would become more powerful than the father. By forcing her to sleep with a mortal, she cannot produce gods who might threaten Zeus's reign. **The Judgement of Paris**, how the Trojan War started. All of this mythic background precedes the *Iliad*; Homer's audiences would have been familiar with it. Thetis, Achilles' mother, is immortal, and she frets about Achilles' mortality—so she tries to protect him by giving him divine armor.

"Overdetermination" is feature of notable Classical literature, which is when events appear to have multiple causes for the same (usually bad) outcome. The Trojan War is **overdetermined** in that **Paris abducts Helen** (there is a human cause), but yet it somehow was all also part of Zeus's plan (divine cause). Destiny, gods, human action often overlap. Achilles' wrath is also according to the will of Zeus even though it was caused by human events.

Personification. Along the same lines, Greek writing tends to personify/objectify and externalize mental and emotional states as if they are deities or spirits (these are called *daimons*, which later, in Christianity, became "demons"). Representing foolishness, joy, strife or other mental and emotional states as deities or entities external to the person is a feature of Classical literature. Can you find examples?

It is hard to assign moral responsibility to characters in Greek literature. Agamemnon was visited by Foolishness (ATE . . . "attay") . . . Sleep and Death carried Sarpedon's body away.

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The God of Dreams, Morpheus, visits people in their sleep. . . Eris, goddess of strife, causes the Trojans to keep fighting even after they decide to sail home. Did they really believe in goddesses of Foolishness and Strife, etc., or are these poetic devices? *No one knows for sure*, but today we read it as metaphor. There is an interesting connection in the Greek mind between irrationality and the divine which has been the subject of many books. Heavy personification—similar concept to the modern “the Devil made me do it”—in Greek writing sometimes makes scholars question the morality of the *Iliad*, basically if there is one. Are people merely puppets of the gods, fate or forces they cannot control? Paper topic right there.

A pre-req for morality is personal responsibility for actions. Fate, destiny, inherited sins/curse and interference by gods, who put emotions in hearts and thoughts into heads, undercut that. The *Homeric morality debate* goes way back and continues today, see Supplemental Materials folder for articles if this heady topic interests you.

Greek concept of κλέος (glory)—immortality or fame, such as being preserved in song or being remembered among the living. Cleopatra = glory (kleo) of the father (patros). Kleos is *what others hear about you*, your reputation or fame. If they sing about you (like in the *Iliad*) after you have died, you have achieved eternal glory. It is very important to Homeric Greeks. There is a concept of a good death, but no concept of a *good* afterlife; there is *no better place in the underworld for heroes*. Everyone is a gloomy shade in Hades. Funeral with laments and tears, a burial mound in one’s homeland, and being remembered in a song is as good as it gets.

Greek Epic Hero: What defines it? Willingness to rush into battle, despite knowing he will likely die, for the sake of battle glory or honor.

Cute summary video of the *Iliad*. We are reading only a few of the 24 books, the ones which are about Achilles and Hector. There are many books of the *Iliad* not about Achilles or Hector; there are many other characters in this epic. It opens with Achilles and ends with Hector’s funeral.

Assignment 1: Short, scholarly essay on the Iliad. Due Feb 4

Read: Lecture 3—Epic Battle Involving the Divine and Man.

Discussion:

- In Book I, **is Achilles justified in refusing to fight?** Recall Achilles has been asked to fight for the honor of Menelaus, as his wife Helen was abducted. *Why should Achilles fight for Agamemnon if Agamemnon steals Achilles’ “wife”?*
- Homer suggests Agamemnon is a bad boss/leader. What evidence is there in the text? Describe his character. Based on your reading of Book I, is Achilles justified in not fighting for him? Keep in mind, Achilles is a “volunteer,” an ally of Greeks, not a subject.

Jan 23. Characteristics of Classical Epics and the Proem (First Song) of the Poem

An epic is defined as “a long poem, typically one derived from ancient oral tradition, narrating the deeds and adventures of heroic or legendary figures or the history of a nation.”

They are typically written in “elevated diction” (formal, solemn speech) and in meter. Meter is a rhythmical arrangement of stressed/unstressed syllables, similar to rap. You can’t hear the meter/rap unless you can read ancient Greek, and read it well. Rapping the *Iliad* is what a Greek

"rhapsode" did. (Shakespeare's meter, iambic pentameter, is quite rappable—there's a Ted talk on it.) Greek epics are written in dactylic hexameter, which is not easily reproduced in English.

Other formal characteristics of epics: "invocation of the Muse," statement of theme, *in media res*, other. It's always a long *poem* according to the classical definition. But this poem doesn't rhyme! It's written in a poetic style.

Close read of the **Proem** ("first song"). . . "Rage"/Wrath (μῆνιν) is the first word, root for **menacing**. Who else has *menis* in the *Iliad*? Only Achilles and immortals. (If the topic interests you, you can read more about this in the *Homeric Dictionary* in Credo Reference. See this one on [anger](#), and this one on [menis](#).)

Menis often translated as "rage," is really "wrath," that is, anger *sustained over time*, menacing simmering anger. It is often regarded as a divine quality! **Near eastern gods were angry, bloodthirsty warrior gods who demanded tribute, sacrifice and frequent "propitiation":**

- Is wrath a Divine attribute or character flaw in Achilles? Is wrath a bad thing in Homer?
- **What is the connection between Zeus' plan and the wrath of Achilles?** If you are interested in exploring this topic, see Supplemental Materials folder, Joe Wilson's "[Homer and the Will of Zeus](#)."
- Refusing to fight (passive aggressive) and letting Greeks die a form of wrath.

The **Invocation of the Muse** in the Proem. Muse is *thea*. Theatrical (*thea*). Music (*muse*). Also connected to the concept of *Greek enthusiasm* (*en* = "inside" *theos* "god" . . . literally god [goes] inside you). The god/muse comes to reside in you through the poet's song. What it means to be "enthused": the goddess takes over your body, you lose your mind. You become possessed. When the audience becomes enthused they become *caught up in something larger than themselves*. Plato's *Dialog Ion*: That's what happens to the audience when the rhapsode recites Homer. The crowd goes wild—they *lose their minds, become irrational, crying over nothing, in Plato's opinion (Ion)*. The Muse takes over.

Epics are stories sung about heroes. Aside from prowess in battle, what makes Achilles heroic? Achilles gives up a long life of obscurity to pursue a short life of glory.

Achilles' life choices. Achilles is god-like, but not immortal. Far from it. He can have a short life of honor, or a long life of obscurity. His mortality is an issue. See 9.424. Achilles picks the former. . . in return for his sacrifice he is expecting *great honor from Zeus*.

This is another reason why the whole Briseis affair upsets him so badly. He chose the short-life and is expecting honor (in the form of gifts) to come his way.

Jan. 28 Pity and Pathos in Homer

Greek Pathos. At different points in the story, we are encouraged to feel sorry for Achilles, Hector and Helen: all seem to be victims of circumstances or fate.

Lengthy speeches which are intended to appeal to the emotion, designed to make the audience cry (just as Plato's *Ion* says). Embassy to Achilles is a pity party. Examples of *pathos* . . . Hector and Andromache, Hector and his son. Greek pathos is the origin of the term "pathetic." (See "Pity and Pathos in Homer.")

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German philosopher Nietzsche (and later Nazis) celebrated the pitiless Homeric Greeks (*Genealogy of Morals*), their “will to power,” their seeming to be above morality, their willingness to kill the weak and lack of empathy; but are Homer’s audiences not meant to feel pity and cry like babies? Is there any contradiction between tough as nails Bronze Age warrior culture vs. the sheer sentimentality of the literature?

Is pity for others the basis for morality? Read an article in the Supplemental Materials folder to see what scholars have to say on the morality in Homer debate.

Homeric simile examples – more when we discuss the battle scenes. Analogies to the natural world—soldiers swarming with their shields on top of dead bodies like flies on a milk pail in the summer.

Jan 30 Shining with a Heroic Light: Beauty in the *Iliad*

“**Poeticizing**” war, battle and death. Book 16, Sarpedon’s death and others.

Eerie shift to second person plural right before someone is about to die (you can hear Gods talking to them, narrating their death). *Dying men have gift of prophecy* and can see/hear the gods around them.

Noble death in Homer=*a beautiful youth cut down in the prime of life*. Tragic and beautiful. . . tragic because he is beautiful, beautiful because it is tragic?

Also *beauty of weaponry, bronze, battle and death*. Horses, chariots and armor lovingly, beautifully described. Bronze bling! Notice all of the light reflected off beautifully crafted bronze armor and helmets.

In Greek, Homer often puts the verb at the end, or some surprise action (twist or punch); slow, slow, slow, slow . . . fast. Description, description . . . surprise action. Lombardo does a nice job translating the action. It’s like slow motion then a rapid speed up, like in movies today.

Is Homer for war or against war? *Hard to tell . . . he often makes it sound so beautiful. Beautiful and gory at the same time.*

In battles scenes, there is so much graphic description of lungs pulled out on spear tips and windpipes run through and eyeballs stepped on, heads cracked open with rocks, black blood.

All sides desecrate bodies. By the time Achilles does it to Hector we are inured to it, that is, it isn’t particularly shocking. Anyway, Hector’s body is protected by an **aegis** (divine protection) put on him by Apollo so his body *can’t* be desecrated. (Are we audiences meant to be shocked by Achilles’ repeated attempts to desecrate Hector’s corpse? Scholars disagree about this. Doesn’t seem shocking, but rather pointless and pitiful.)

He needs to stop “dragging around that corpse” and just let it go! Have you ever drug around a dead corpse? I’m sure I have. . . mental baggage.

[Shield of Achilles](#), Book 18. What does it mean? *The Homer Encyclopedia* in Credo Reference a good resource or starting point for Iliad-related topics. Often said to be an example of “ekphrasis.”

What are people writing about? Be prepared to share.

The Ending of the *Iliad*. Zeus arranges for Priam’s Ransom.

- Is this the “great honor” from Zeus Achilles had been expecting or hoping for?

- Does Achilles *really* feel compassion for Priam, and that is why he finds peace (Christian interpretation)--or is it supposed to be "propitiation of wrath" (little Ajax' speech) which ends the grieving process?

More thought questions:

- **Is Achilles going to die fighting at Troy or sail home with all of his ransom?** Achilles is always threatening to pack up and sail home. After he receives the ransom, *how do we know what he is going to do next?* What clues does Homer give us?
- If the *Iliad* is really "about" the wrath of Achilles, **why does the *Iliad* end with the funeral of Hector rather than the death of Achilles** or the Fall of Troy?
- **Who in the story has achieved everlasting glory (*kleos*) or immortality through song?** Does Achilles? What about Hector?
- **Does Achilles ever receive the great honor he is expecting to receive from Zeus?**

Achilles' ghost appears in the *Odyssey* and he says "no"! Wasn't worth dying young, Hades is a terrible place.

Legacy of the *Iliad*. We end up liking Hector/Trojans a little better. . . other people do too! Does Homer? Homer lived on the Ionian/Trojan side of the Aegean.

The Romans and the British will develop founding myths which trace their histories back to the Trojan side of the conflict. Rome was founded by a Trojan, Aeneas, in another famous epic, the *Aeneid*, which is why Romans are confused with Trojans on a football field and on certain products. They come to identify with Trojans. Civic virtues, duty and piety, risking your life to save comrades, family and county, etc.

Feb. 4 From Muses to Moses: Rise of Biblical Narrative and the Death of the Rhapsode.

The Greek concept of the divine changed over the centuries. Over the course time, the Greek gods became idealized as perfect, unchanging and good, rather than being like vengeful, impetuous, vainglorious and sexual humans. By the time of Plato and Aristotle, about 400 years after Homer, there are competing ideas of the gods in the Greek world. Many are questing the Homeric conception. Some are believing in a master architect or one who set everything in motion or the gods as abstractions, not powerful humans.

However, we are now leaving the Ancient Greek world and going to the Hebrew. It is all part of a one contiguous region called the "Levant."

However, the Hebrews do not have rhapsodes/poets. **No Greek/pagan "Hero Worship."** No worship of humans as gods or semi-divines . . . no ancestor worship either. No graven images. Plain pottery too. They appear not to be beauty junkies like the Greeks. They do not make statues of humans or animals like their pagan neighbors. They pursue an ideal of purity, but share the odd concept of a "perfect bull" as an ideal sacrificial animal. . . *perfect* meaning it has no skin blemishes, among other things. Perfection means without blemish, defect or stain.

Moses will lead the Hebrews (renamed Israelites) out of Egypt, but he doesn't get to go to the Promised Land. All glory to go to God, not his prophet(s) or men. OT/Hebrews **try not to make prophets divine**—Hebrews culturally/ideologically **opposed to hero worship** and attributing god-like or divine characteristics to people. Unlike Hellenistic (Greek) people, Hebrews don't like deification. No one is like a God. *Who is like God?* No description of God permitted.

Course Syllabus

Description of God in any concrete way limits Him, so in the OT God will manifest as a flame or cloud or light or dark, something which lacks hard edges, is constantly in motion, and lacking concrete definition. The ancient Hebrews, unlike the Greeks, practice an **aniconic** religion.

If description of the divine is prohibited, and humans are not to be glorified, how does this impact the literariness of the OT?

Read: Lecture 5—Epic Form in Contrast to Biblical Narrative.

Assignment 1: *Iliad* paper is due.

Assignment 2: Bibliographic Scavenger Hunt, assigned. Due Feb 18.

Feb. 6 Bible as Literature: What is “Bible as Literature”?

Bible as literature = approaching the text as the work of humans rather than the divine, and stripping away the layers of theology. That is not so easy for many students who have been trained to approach the text in relationship to the New Testament and to Christian theology. It may seem sacrilegious, even, to put a text back into its original context. Nonetheless, we are going to try, briefly, to try to approach it from the ancient Hebrew perspective, starting with its name.

The Hebrew Bible has been designated by Christian scholars as the “Old Testament,” *suggesting that the Old is completed by the New*, and that together they comprise one continuous work. But they were written in different languages, different time periods, with different cultural considerations. The “Hebrew Bible” is the more correct (scholarly) reference for the OT. It was written in Hebrew. In some ways it is un-epic. . . again, Hebrews don’t glorify people as heroes.

On Blackboard, you will find an article by a theologian, Tod Linafelt, “On the Bible’s Style.” Skim his discussion on the Bible’s “**economy of style**” of Hebrew prose. Do you agree with his assessment? Linafelt is not the first scholar to acknowledge the Bible’s seeming lack of literary style—which *is a style*, according to him. Also in the SM folder are several articles comparing the *Iliad* with the OT.

Biblical Narrative. Actually, many scholars, even going back to St. Augustine, have been critical of the HB. Why are the prose portions of the Hebrew Bible so nondescript? Why is it not more literary, more like the *Iliad*?

What is literary about the Hebrew Bible? We will get to that.

Assigned readings:

Genesis: 1-4 Creation, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel; 7-9 Noah’s Ark; 19, 22 Abraham and Isaac (just skim)

Exodus: Read as much as you can get through by class time to chapter 20. As a story, things pretty much fall apart after 20--which is where people often think Exodus ends; but do read 33, 34, and jump ahead to the real end, 40.

You may use any study bible of your choosing. I’m using the NEB (Oxford). The NA doesn’t have much Exodus.

When you read, write down things that surprise you.

Feb. 11 Introduction to the Hebrew Bible (Christian Old Testament)

"Old Testament"--"Hebrew Bible" more correct term . . . we can call it the OT in class.

"Pentateuch" = five scrolls. First five books "of Moses" (that is, attributed to Moses). Books were scrolls. When doing research, might try both "Old Testament" and "Hebrew Bible," see if you get different results.

The Exodus Tradition or story—includes Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Leviticus—first five books of Moses. It isn't just Exodus.

"Exodus" means coming out, referring to the story of Moses leading his people out of bondage in Egypt. Moses's name—which is Egyptian--has a hidden meaning.

The first five books of Moses represent one continuous history, like chapters in a book, written by one person, not separate books. Even if it didn't begin this way, it was **redacted** (new material woven in, old content edited and smoothed over) many times by priestly scribes and later time periods. Even the oldest parts of the Hebrew Bible appear to be a composite work or older texts.

In fact, the Priestly content is so great that this has resulted in a new understanding that large parts of Exodus are not as old as once thought (see the **documentary hypothesis** or **JEDP theory**). Note that JEDP is often rejected by evangelical Christians.

No focus on the afterlife in the OT. Sheol (later "hell"), like Hades, is not a good place to be. Ancients Hebrews, similar to the Greeks of that same period (800-700BC), *cannot envision a happy life without a body*. Sheol in the OT is the same as Hades in the *Iliad*, a gloomy place for shades. Some Jews will come to adopt a belief in physical resurrection (dispute between Pharisees and Sadducees) but that doesn't come until about 185 BC. Only later comes the concept of a soul existing without a body and idea of Heaven as a place where souls go after they die.

If no afterlife/promise of Heaven is made in the HB, why is it so important to follow God's commandments?

Is it a good or bad thing to be a Chosen People for God to dwell among? What is your take?

Wrath, defining characteristic of Gods and heroes? Similarities between OT and Homer.

Characteristics of Biblical Hebrew Prose:

- parataxis (*and* this. . . *and* that, way of connecting sentences together)
- plain style (not *elevated diction* as with epic)
- puns—especially with names--but the OT is chock full of double meanings.
- patterning / repetition (command and fulfillment pattern: And the Lord said 1,2,3 . . . and he did 1,2,3)
- economy of description
- lack of explanation of motives. . . lack of interiority, getting inside people's heads.

More on this next time.

Who were the Israelites? Israelites and Canaanites. Polytheism to monotheism a gradual evolution. Where is the land of Canaan? See maps.

Late Bronze Age Collapse and Exodus. The Egyptian Empire and Mycenaean Greek Empire went down at the same time; depopulated and dramatically shrank. Some speculation about

loss of Egyptian political control over Canaan and the rise of the Israelites.

Read: Lecture 6—Introduction to the Hebrew Bible.

Feb. 13 Class discussion: Genesis and Exodus

Characteristics of Hebrew writing vs. Greek. Hebrew has lots of puns/double meanings, parataxis, limited interiority (that is, you don't know what the characters are thinking or feeling), economy of style (limited description). For example, what does an angel look like? Does the text tell us? What does God look like? Less focus on description as well as internal thoughts, motivations and emotional states than Greek.

Thee's and thou's in King James Version (KJV). Some of what we associate with Biblical speech is actually the *English of 1611*. . . published a few years after Shakespeare publishes *Hamlet*. It is the language of Shakespeare's England, not ancient at all. It seems that way to us.

Book, chapter and verse. Citing the Bible correctly.

Where in Ancient Greek there are about 10 words for different forms of anger and at least 6 for different forms of love, there are fewer words in the BH lexicon and each word can mean many things; the OT is rich in puns and leitworts (meaningful repetitions of the same word or word roots. If you are interested in seeing examples of leitworts, see "Leitwort Style and Literary Structure in the J Primeval Narrative" by Ronald Hendel in the Supplemental Materials folder). Many names in the Bible are puns in Hebrew or have a hidden meaning. Puns and double meaning create a sense of revelation.

Discussion: *Genesis, Cain and Abel, Noah.*

Genesis: Creation, Adam and Eve.

Elohim vs Yahweh (Jehovah). Later Adonoi. Names for God in the HB used to date the text.

Where are angels in the creation story? When did God create them? Where is the story of the rebellion and fall of Lucifer (aka Satan)? Why or how did the serpent become "Satan"? What did the Garden of Eden look like? What is the Tree of Life? What is the Tree of Knowledge? What happened after Adam and Eve ate the fruit? Why did they eat it? Ask yourselves these questions when you read Genesis.

Adam and Eve, the couple that had it all *and blew it!*

The Fall of Man. More written about the Fall in literature than any other passage in the OT. The Fortunate Fall a literary theme.

Cain and Abel, various interpretations of the story and why Cain's offering was not accepted.

Why does God destroy creation with a flood? Noah's animal sacrifice. "Covenant of the Rainbow" or the Noahic Covenant.

Noah, Canaan and **Ham's Curse**. No, it does NOT mention Black people, but it was used to justify enslavement of Blacks. Black Hebrews--evidence?

Blood sacrifice / blood atonement in the OT. How/why is blood "the life," and why is blood and fat (fat is "the glory") sacred to God? The HB mentions this in many places. There is even a prohibition against eating the blood.

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To the Hebrews, blood is sacred, the animating force of life and of the flesh, not soul or spirit. Saying: Blood is the life, fat is the glory. Blood was drained out of the sacrifice and used for ritual purification. Fat is what makes the fire (burnt offering) flare and produces the savory aroma. Through the blood of a sacrifice (has to be a young male animal, first born and fatty, no skin blemishes or lame, genitals intact), the sinner is ritually purified. (I placed articles in the SM folder if you are interested in the origin of blood atonement.)

Blood is used in the OT for purification—notice that Moses is often smearing or flinging or anointing with blood. Cleaning with sanctified blood is not a concept familiar to us. Blood, fat and liver, whole offerings, partial offerings, and ritualized slaughter and a means of eliminating sin and pleasing God. God has no need for food or wine as in the *Iliad*, where the gods feast after sacrifice is made. This god doesn't eat the tribute. Yahweh doesn't want to eat. He wants purity, and blood is a means of achieving it.

Abraham. Circumcision (briefly) and blood. Isaac and Ishmael. Why are they called "Israelites"? Angel names end in - el. Micha-el, Rapha-el, Gabri-el. "El" is God. Isra-el (contends or wrestles with God). Isaac's son Jacob's name change - his decedents are "Israelites." Ishmael's are Arabs. Sons of Ishmael.

Make sure you have finished Exodus for next time.

Read Lecture 7--Moses to Muses: Greek Epic vs. Biblical Narrative.

Feb. 18 Bewildered in the Wilderness: The Exodus Tradition as a Dystopia.

Moses famously says to Pharaoh: "Let my people go!" . . . but it isn't to freedom, as we often envision (as in Cecil B. DeMille *Ten Commandments*), but rather to worship Yahweh (YHVH = Yahweh and also Jehovah, the German form) in the desert and serve Him exclusively. One form of slavery exchanged for an even more difficult servitude to wrathful Yahweh, who keeps threatening to annihilate his people for the slightest infractions—or even perceived infractions (we will discuss this when we talk about the Golden Calf incident)--of the law.

After the Ten Commandments, new laws and ordinances are issued through the mouth of Moses. . . some famous (You shall not suffer a witch to live), most are obscure. Much of it is about rituals. Most people don't pay attention to all those laws and ordinances, or we wouldn't be working or shopping on the Sabbath, getting tattoos, eating bacon, or wearing cotton/poly blend socks. . . there are 600+ laws (Orthodox Jews try to follow all of them).

Chosen People. It isn't a lot of fun to be Chosen. The deity picks slaves and their descendants to be his people because they are *obedient*. Not more creative, not more intelligent, not stronger, not more beautiful--just more obedient. They are a "slave people." Through 400 years of bondage and suffering in Egypt, they are now ready to be good, reliable servants, to endure the harsh laws they are about to receive. They could be entrusted to follow commandments and uphold his laws. He frees them for *His sake*, not theirs; to glorify Him. God wants glory for himself. He needs servants to do that.

They are in bondage, just like in Egypt, but to a different sovereign/deity, who, just like Pharaoh, feeds a spare diet and expects them to erect structures in the desert for his glory and dwelling. It is a bit unsettling to read what they go through. . . and that they are expected to subjugate and destroy other people as it is part of God's will/plan (the Canaanites, like the Trojans, have got to go because Yahweh wants it that way. . .).

Mt. Sinai and the Ten Commandments. Mt. Sinai is the high point of the Exodus story. Only observe: The people can't hear/understand when God speaks (only Moses can); they hear

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trumpets and thunder. Different versions of the “Decalogue” in the OT. Jewish, Protestant & Catholic each have their own spin. Literally, a different Ten. We will compare them in class.

Hebrew Bible: What’s this about the “sins of the fathers” will be visited upon the children?

Children punished for the sins of the previous generation? The Greeks have the exact same concept of inherited sin, and of a cursed people / bloodline. In *Oedipus the King*, the House of Laertes is cursed for a sin of the father for three, maybe four, generations.

The role of Aaron in Exodus, and the Golden Calf episode. We will discuss different interpretations of Golden Calf story. Did the Israelites knowingly defy God’s Commandments? What was the calf meant to symbolize? Why authorized it? Why was Aaron not punished?

Tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant. *How do these objects compare to the Shield of Achilles?* Why is so much of Exodus a detailed blueprint for a construction project? Is Moses/Yahweh competing with Pharaoh? Also, *why does Yahweh seem to care so much what Pharaoh thinks of him?*

The rest of the *Exodus* story (after the *Ten Commandments* ends). What happens?

By the end they believe they would have been better off as slaves in Egypt or dead. God grants their wish. They are doomed to die in the wilderness. (All that occurs in *Numbers*, which you are not required to read.)

In the end, who got to go to the Promised Land? How many left Egypt, and how many get to go?

Read: Lecture 8—Bewildered in the Wilderness.

Assignment 2 due.

Moving on now to Greek Tragedy. . .

Read *Oedipus the King*

Feb. 20 Ancient Athenian Drama—Tragedy—*Oedipus the King*

Theban Cycle is the source material, just like the Epic Cycle is the source for the *Iliad*.

The story of *Oedipus* did not actually begin with Sophocles. Goes way back to 750BC or even earlier. It’s called “Theban” because it takes place in city of Thebes. It is called “cycle” because that’s what Aristotle called it, but it refers to a body of work from which other work came.

Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (430 BC)—the perfect Greek tragedy, according to Aristotle.

Aristotle’s Poetics on Tragedy.

Elements of Tragedy. The Tragic hero vs. the Epic hero. What’s the difference?

Freud and the Oedipal Complex.

The hamartia (character flaw) debate: **What exactly is *Oedipus’s hamartia*?** Psychological blindness or stubborn refusal to see the truth? Or something else? What do you think?

Read: Lecture--*Oedipus the King*.

Read: Supplemental readings on Oedipus's hamartia: E. R. Dodds vs. R. Drew Griffith.

Also, watch the "Thug Notes" for *Oedipus*.

Feb. 25 Wrap up Sophocles

Sophocles is considered the most *Homeric* of Greek tragedians.

Greek tragedy and Greek religious rites. The Greek chorus (they really are a chorus, and they danced). Dithyrambs.

Greek philosophy and religion. Plato. By the 4th century, are the Greeks moving towards monotheism? Different concepts of the divine but moving towards abstraction. Plato vs Aristotle, very different approaches, both inspired Christianity. For one thing, change / temporality is imperfect, but to be permanent and unchanging is ideal. God cannot change but has to always be.

Read the Gospel of Matthew over the weekend.

Feb. 27 - Mar 5 The Greek New Testament

Gospels: Account of the life of Jesus. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; when written, by whom and why. *One of these is not like the others*. . . "Synoptic" (same eye in Greek) Gospels vs. John. Gospel as a literary form.

Why are we reading *Matthew*? Highlights—I will walk you through what you need to know . . . beatitudes and other famous parts. But first, who is "Paul"?

He didn't write Matthew or any of the Gospels. He did write most of the books of the NT, though . . . explained how/why Jesus died for the sins of the world after Jesus was crucified. Therefore, he's a very important figure. His account fits into the tradition of Hebrew blood sacrifice/blood atonement. Paul, who was a Jew, is credited with the salvation theology of the Church. Second to Jesus, Paul is the most significant contributor and apologist (defender of the faith) for Christianity. Augustine is second.

Back to Matthew. Matthew was written by Matthew.

Jesus as the new Moses/Messiah. Written to persuade a Jewish audience that Jesus is, or was, the Messiah they were expecting. Ironically, Matthew later is used as source for justifying anti-Semitism because of Jesus's attacks on the Pharisees, a sect which controlled the central Temple (with Roman support). The average Jew at this time was poor, was *not* a Pharisee, and would not have found anything offensive about Jesus's attacks on Pharisees for being hypocrites. Most of them didn't like the Pharisees either.

Matthew is really important for a number of reasons – Christmas for one. It is the Gospel with three wise men bearing gifts and the star of Bethlehem. The Magis are from the east, from Persia. There are the beatitudes, including "Blessed" are the poor *in spirit* . . . and the Lord's Prayer.

Why does Jesus refer to himself in the third person in Matthew as "The Son of Man"? Good research paper topic.

Course Syllabus

Matthew emphasizes Jesus as *a man like Moses*, who is the fulfillment of Hebrew messianic scripture, while John, written for gentile audiences, emphasizes the divinity of Jesus, that Jesus is God, and a Jesus who seems to be aware of having been as God's side since the beginning of time.

Just skim Matthew and I'll do the heavy lifting in class discussion. We are just going to bounce to famous lines.

Read: Lecture Notes--The Gospel of Matthew.

Mar 9-14 MIDTERMS

Mar 16-21 Spring Break.

Mar 24 The Fall of Rome and Early Middle Ages

What caused Rome to Fall? Germanic hordes, surprising fun facts about them. They aren't what you think of when you think of "barbarians."

Early Christianity and paganism.

St. Jerome and the Vulgate.

St. Augustine, sections from *City of God*.

Original Sin. The Fall of Lucifer and the Fall of Man in Augustine.

Manicheanism. Dualism. Gnosticism. Arianism. Other "isms.

Medieval *Contemptus Mundi*. Often traced back to Augustine. Very important theme in literature.

Now we jump ahead 1,000 years.

Read: Lecture—The Fall of Rome and Early Middle Ages.

Mar 26 Medieval Romance – Courtly Love

King Arthur – where did he come from?

Characteristics of the Courtly Love literature and chivalric romances.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight – a hybrid between Chivalric Romance and medieval Christian allegory.

14th century Middle English poetry . . . the English "alliterative revival."

Those funny Middle English characters and how to read them (yes, you can read Middle English, if you want to . . . don't have to). Enumeration of SGGK and how to cite it in your papers.

The Pearl Poet (aka "the Gawain poet"). He's really into purity—pure like a Pearl. Pearl is another poem he wrote.

The Plague (Black Death), new religiosity in the 14th century. Augustinian revival. Concept of male chastity in Gawain. In earlier analogs, Gawain is a courteous wooer of women.

Who / what is the Green Knight and what does he symbolize?

Why is the ideal object of desire in medieval romances most often a *married woman*? How does this jive with Christianity? C. S. Lewis explains it in *Allegory of Love*.

Read *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Assignment 3, *How to Stand on the Shoulders of Giants: The Scholarly Literature Review of (ONE ASPECT) of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Due April 14.

Read: Lecture—Late Middle Ages: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Mar 31 Discussion: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (SGGK)

SGGK appears to be a **composite** story, that is, it is comprised of other elements taken from other stories, such as the Beheading Game, temptation of a knight by a beautiful lady, and the Exchange of Winnings Game. Gawain, Arthur, Morgan le Fay, and the Green Knight are characters who exist in other stories. Scholars have studied the **analog**s from which the Gawain poet took his material (see SM folder for summaries of these), but such historical approaches have really not shed light on the meaning of the story.

The poet is striving to create a **sense of the marvelous**, fabulous, an “otherworldly” experience. Beautiful, detailed description of luxury, finery, feasts, opulence and hunting. Beautiful ladies as well. Nature. But Gawain becomes increasingly concerned about his mortality, his date with the Green Knight, which is like a judgement of his behavior.

Gawain goes off on his solitary pilgrimage, almost like entering into another dimension or parallel world (the world of the Fay, or Fairy people). Green knight on a green horse, paper castle, no direction for how to get to the Green Chapel (he just wanders and finds it) makes it all seem unreal or **allegorical**, to be read on a symbolic level. But if so, what does it mean?

The overriding theme is one of keeping one’s promise, *fidelity to one’s pledged word*.

It is a New Year’s tale, and people make promises at the beginning of the year which strive to live up to, even though they may not have been aware of the challenges they might face.

However, it is also can be interpreted as a *Contemptus Mundi* poem. I will explain that.

The Shield of Sir Gawain and its symbolism.

My favorite Gawain passages. The beautiful naturalism in Gawain.

The Green Chapel – What does it look like (not anything like a chapel! More like a burial mound).

What are people researching/ writing about? Please share what you have learned about SGGK in the course of your literature review.

Outer adventure, quest and battle becomes an inner struggle for the Christian Knight.

Keep inner spiritual struggles in mind when you read *Hamlet*.

Please read *Hamlet*. No Fear Shakespeare is my favorite online source for reading Shakespeare because it has the original and modern translation side by side. *Hamlet* is in the NA as well.

Apr 7 Introduction to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*

Hamlet is the most quotable and famous of Shakespeare’s play, but also one which many critics love to hate.

It’s too long, lacks sufficient action, and seems to be rather pointless (oops, did I say that?).

Course Syllabus

C. S. Lewis defends Hamlet after the famous poet and critic T.S. Eliot boldly called the play a failure, but C. S. Lewis defends it as a mystery play, a play about “the darkness which enwraps Hamlet and the whole tragedy. . . .” Lewis also reads it on a spiritual level, that we read Hamlet’s speeches with interest because “they describe so well a certain spiritual region through which most of us have passed. . . . A sort of impasse where we see no good solution or no positive outcome is possible.”

What do you think? Good play or failure? People say the Lion King is a modern day *Hamlet* but *Hamlet* doesn’t have as happy an ending.

Read *Hamlet* if you haven’t already.

Watch: Thug Notes *Hamlet*.

Apr 9 Discussion of *Hamlet*

The medieval world of *Hamlet* and Purgatory. What is Purgatory? *Dark place of waiting and suffering where one becomes acutely aware of one’s own sin (guilt). Welcome to Denmark.*

Shakespeare wrote in Protestant Elizabethan England. However, *Hamlet* is set Pre-Reformation Denmark where everyone was Catholic, and—regardless of Shakespeare’s own beliefs or the beliefs of his audience---Catholic beliefs about purgatory, guilt, sin, suicide and confession seem to influence the actions of characters in the play. So we need to talk about them as they do inform that actions of the characters and understanding of the play.

Speaking of that, where is/isn’t Divine Providence in the play?

Does Hamlet get revenge in the end?

The setting of the play is in a very dark, foggy and gloomy landscape, a castle on a promontory near graveyards. Darkness, death, insanity and decay are ever present themes.

Ghost says: “Don’t let the act [of seeking vengeance] taint your mind.” Why immediately after that does Hamlet feign insanity? How does he compare with Ophelia (real insanity)? How do they parallel each other? Hamlet and Ophelia make other characters feel guilty.

Is Ophelia pregnant? Clues in *Hamlet* that she may be. “Get thee to a nunnery” even more awful.

Contemptus Mundi again. “Ubi Sunt?” (Where are they now?)

Is *Hamlet* really a vengeance play? It was modelled on one, but what is it really?

Hamlet’s famous inaction—his supposed character flaw--revisited. Is he stuck? Are others stuck? Do they feel guilty? Are they mired in self-reflection? Is this a liminal place between life and death? Wait. . . are they all in *Purgatory*? A “Catholic” (or more like existential!) read of *Hamlet*.

The Soliloquies. Discussion of these, along with the meaning of the famous lines in them. To be or not to be. . . what does it mean in the context of the play?

Read: Lecture—*Hamlet*

The chapter on “Black Choler” in *The Story of Black*, in Supplemental Materials.

Start thinking about a Hamlet paper or Milton paper.

Assignment 4: Extended Scholarly Research Paper assigned. Due April 30.

Apr 14 Renaissance Melancholia

In the Renaissance, Melancholia is linked to both genius and insanity. Melancholia – “black choler.” Hamlet as a *melancholic*. . . Hamlet the Romantic, Hamlet the Goth. . . he is young, wears black, is alienated, puts everyone down only they are too dumb to know it.

Is Gertrude guilty? Does she feel guilty? Is Claudius? Does he feel/act guilty? Is Ophelia? What is the role of guilt in *Hamlet*? Does he make everyone feel guilty? Is he a thorn? A prick to their conscience?

How does the *Hamlet* resolve? Let’s discuss the ending. Does Hamlet get vengeance?

“Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead!” Punch line. What does it mean?

Romantic (19th century) and Modernist (20th century) interpretations of *Hamlet*. Is the play really “a failure” (T.S. Eliot)? Or does he just not get it? What do you think?

John Harvey’s *The Story of Black* (SR), in Supplemental Materials, is a good resource for *Hamlet* and Milton’s “L’Allegro” “Il Penseroso.” Most of this is available online through Google Books, but I scanned all of the relevant pages from my print copy.

Please read Milton’s “L’Allegro” “Il Penseroso” for next time. There are many good, annotated sources for these online including the Dartmouth Reading Milton Reading Room ([L’Allegro, Il Penseroso](#)) or Cummings study guides [LA IP](#). You can find great summaries of the poems online like this [one](#), but please do try to read the poems.

Apr 16 Milton and the Genius of Melancholy

“L’Allegro” “Il Penseroso.” These are **companion** poems (two poems means to be read together and contrasted with each other).

Italian titles reflect two musical moods. **Allegro** is happy, mirthful, cheerful, light and rapid. The other serious, dark, somber, deliberate and slow--**pensive**. The poems are written in two musical modes. Many positive images of blackness in there—we’ll find them, like a puzzle. *Melancholia, whose root is blackness, is a very good thing to Puritanical Milton! Active, carefree life outdoors, sensual life of pleasure vs. the contemplative life of study.*

Archaic words (meaning old words no longer used), familiar words used in unfamiliar ways, classical allusions and references to historical figures . . . contribute to “solemnity” (C.S. Lewis’s take) in Milton’s verse, like putting on fine clothes for a ceremony. Milton scholars have to study his texts like scripture to extract the full meaning, but you can read it on a superficial level and it still works.

Orpheus’s strain and Morpheus’s train. *Who are these people?* The **annotations** in critical editions to help you understand the text better. Morning Lark vs. Nightly Philomel.

Compare Orpheus in the two. Is he better off in LA or IP? Who is more powerful, Mirth or Melancholy?

"Wanton" – a **Renaissance pejorative** (a put-down word). "Wantonness" is not a good thing. It means lascivious, indecent, lustful. Almost exclusively applied to women.

The vine motif in L'Allegro will reappear in *Paradise Lost*. It symbolizes being uncontrolled (out of control), undisciplined, decadent, sensuous . . . passive and submissive. Basically, in Milton, if it's a vine it's no good. And another thing, vines are feminine and they need strong male elms to cling to. Twisting and turning, uncontrolled and curving vs. straight and orderly, disciplined.

We are going to do a close read of the two poems.

One critic, Stanley Fish, described L'Allegro as a descent into irrationality and *sensuality* (Milton coined that word) while Il Penseroso is an ascent to the divine through contemplation, study, discipline and musical harmony.

Read Lecture 11--Milton and the Genius of Melancholy.

Milton's *Paradise Lost*: Books 1, 4, 8, 9, 10

April 21, 23 Milton's Paradise Lost

It all comes together now, the *Hebraic* and the *Hellenistic, Biblical and Epic traditions*.

Milton set out to write a Classical Epic in English about the Fall of Man.

It's very Augustinian. In fact, Milton wrote a work of theology called *On Christian Doctrine* after Augustine's work by the same title (*De Doctrina Christiana*). Milton had a very high opinion of Augustine--and of himself too, obviously.

Like Homer (possibly), Milton was blind when he composed PL. He composed it in his head and dictated it.

It is not an easy read! Inverted word order, long sentences (referred to as "**long periods**"), laden with classical allusions which seem like digressions (sometimes called "Miltonic similes"—remember the Homeric ones?) and unfamiliar language can make it mentally taxing. . . if you feel as if you are getting lost, read a summary first, then read. Try also reading out loud.

Neologisms--Milton actually makes up words in PL—"sensuous" was not a word until Milton invented it! Contributed words to the English language via PL. Here are [some](#). He also uses old words in novel ways, and archaic words even for his own day.

If *Paradise Lost* is an Epic, who is the Hero?

"*Sympathy for the Devil*."

***Some critics say PL is **sublime** (The "Miltonic Sublime"). What is the "*Miltonic Sublime*"? *The history of the idea*.

Lecture 12—Milton's *Paradise Lost*

Supplemental Reading:

T.S. Eliot ([Milton I](#)) vs. C.S. Lewis, Preface.

C. S. Lewis's [A Preface to Paradise Lost](#) is an old-school dive into Milton's PL by Medieval and Renaissance scholar, and Christian apologist—also the author of the Narnia series--with an examination of his use of Augustine and Milton's "Augustinianism." Part of it is a reaction against T.S. Eliot's attack on Milton, called "Milton I." He says, basically, Eliot, you don't get it.

April 28-April 30 *Research Essays Due*

What did you write about?

May 5 Final Exam