Classics 320: Classical Literature

Texts

Required Texts
1. Apuleius. The Golden Ass or Metamorphoses (E.J. Kenney, tr.). Penguin USA, 014-043590-5
2. Homer. Iliad (R. Lattimore, tr.). Chicago, 022-646940-9

Optional Texts

NB: You will find these texts in the Aztec Shops sorted by the author I have underlined.
*** You will be expected to recognize, among other things, quoted passage from the texts I cite above. I highly urge you to have copies of the translations I have set above in preference to alternate versions of the plays.

Course Description and Requirements

Here is a course for majors and non-majors interested in the fundamentals of this thing we casually refer to as Classical literature. The course does two things. The first it doesn't do very well, but it tries: this course is designed to attack some very big, very important questions about literature in general. What is literature? What is a text? What is a context? What is a poet? What is an audience? What is genre? And, if that weren't enough to keep us busy, we must also ask whether any of these questions change significantly if you insert the adjective “classical” in front of the nouns under consideration.

But wait. There are even more big and vague questions that we want to consider in the course of the semester. What is epic poetry? What is lyric poetry? What are the origins of written literature? How did Western prose literature begin? What are the origins of the Western novel? How is it that Homer is the source of almost every other generic form of literature that develops in the West in the centuries after him? How does Latin literature differ from Greek literature? Why did classical poets "copy" each other? and, finally, ultimately, what brought classical literature to its (historic) demise?

The second thing this course does, it does very well: it introduces you to a very narrowly drawn set of canonical works, four in number, which you will be expected to read, reread, and embrace as your own. This course is about getting to know the works Homer, Vergil and Apuleius. Having become acquainted with these three authors, you will discover yourself to have become, almost miraculously, well equipped to read with more facility and insight other giants of the Western canon. With any luck, you will have begun to recognize the extent of the all-pervasive, inescapable, enduring influence of these mighty fonts of the most awe-inspiring language you could hope to encounter.

Grading
Evaluation of the student's progress will involve a midterm, an analytical paper, a final, and regular brief reading quizzes. The midterm and the final will both be bluebook-style examinations and will call for the student to define terms, write a series of brief responses to passages. In this way, the midterm, while assessing a student's understanding of the material of the first part of the course, will also prepare the student for the final. Reading quizzes, administered on a regular basis through Blackboard, will be given for both the benefit of the instructor, who will use them to track regular preparation of reading assignments, and for the benefit of the students, who will use them to monitor whether they are attending to the detail of the reading.

Your semester writing project is delineated below with full detail and direction. This analysis will involve about 6 to 8 pages of writing.

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semester writing assignment</td>
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<td>Final</td>
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The midterm will be returned in class. No grades will be posted publicly. You will be able to check your grade at your own convenience on Blackboard. Yet the official grade-book of the course is my own private software; discrepancies do occur between raw or partially weighted scores you will see on Blackboard and the data I keep my own software. Blackboard is rather inflexible and uncaring; my own grade-book is pliant and forgiving. Trust my grade-book.

Exams and papers not collected within a year of the course will be recycled into clean white sheets of paper to be used by future generations of students.

**Intellectual Properties**

You must ask the owner of the course's intellectual content (a.k.a. me) for permission to record the class; yet there is no need to cite me for any ideas of mine that you use either in your exams or on your paper. You must ask my permission to bring any guests to class. I reserve ownership of the class and the specific right to monitor and adjust course content (namely the reading schedule which follows) to aide student progress toward the course objective.