

English 203: World Literature

Reason and Passion in the Ancient World

Garden State Correctional Facility, Fall 2013

Instructors:

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Course Aims:

How much control do we have over the course of our own lives? Can a good person's life be ruined by bad luck? What is a hero, and should everyone strive to live heroically? When, if ever, should we let our feelings guide our actions? Is a life without passion a happy life?

In this course, we will look at how these questions and others are explored in some of the most important and influential works of Ancient Greek and Roman literature. Starting with early lyric and Homeric epic, we will look at several Greek tragedies, Greek historical writing, and some early Socratic dialogues by Plato. We will finish by looking at how epic poetry and philosophy are developed in the Roman period.

Over the course of the semester, we will consider whether, and to what extent, the concerns of these ancient authors still resonate with us. At the same time, we will examine the effectiveness of different literary forms, and discuss the relationship between the author's form of presentation and his or her subject matter. Through the close reading and comparison of a variety of texts, we will also reflect on the role of literature more generally: how, and in what way, can writings from the past give us insight into our own lives and the lives of others?

Assignments and Grading:

Short Essay

Midterm Exam

Long Essay

In Class Group Presentations

Final Exam

Readings:

All readings are from the following texts, which you will be given:

- Homer, *The Essential Homer: Selections from the Illiad and the Odyssey*, Stanley Lombardo (trans and ed.) (Hackett Publishing, 2000)
- Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, *Greek Tragedy*, Shomit Dutta (trans and ed.) (Penguin Classics 2004)
- Plato, *Five Dialogues*, 2nd edition, G.M.A. Grube (trans) (Hackett Publishing, 2002)
- Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, 3rd edition (Hackett Publishing, 2000)
- ENG203 Course Reader (2013)

You will get much more out of each class if you do the readings ahead of time. Some readings are designated as "Supplementary": these are not essential, but will also be helpful.

Week 1: Introduction

i) Monday, September 9

- *Topics*: Overview of the course; guidelines and expectations

ii) Wednesday, September 11

- *Topics*: Introduction to the Ancient Greek World; Greek lyric poetry
- *Readings*: selections from Sappho, Bacchylides

Week 2: - Greek Epic: Homer

i) Monday, September 16

- *Topics*:
- *Readings*: selections from the Illiad and the Odyssey

ii) Wednesday, September 18

- *Topics*:
- *Readings*: selections from the Illiad and the Odyssey

Week 3: Homer (continued)

i) Monday, September 23

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:* Selections from the Illiad and the Odyssey
- *Supplementary Readings:*

ii) Wednesday, September 25

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:* Selections from the Illiad and the Odyssey
- *Assignments Due:*

Week 4: Greek Tragedy: Oedipus Rex

i) Monday, September 30

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:*

ii) Wednesday, October 2

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:*

Week 5: Greek Tragedy: Medea

i) Monday, October 7

- **SHORT PAPERS DUE**
- *Topics:*
- *Readings:*

ii) Wednesday, October 9

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:*

Week 6: Greek History: Herodotus

i) Monday, October 14

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:*

ii) Wednesday, October 16

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:*

Week 7: Review and Midterm Exam

i) Monday, October 21

- *Exam Review and Office Hours*

ii) Wednesday, October 23

- **IN CLASS MIDTERM EXAM**

Week 8: Introduction to Philosophy, and the Socratic Dialogue

i) Monday, October 28

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:* selections from Rulebook for Arguments; selections from the Clouds
- *Supplementary Readings:*

ii) Wednesday, October 30

- *Topics:*

- *Readings:* Euthyphro

Week 9: The Socratic Way of Life

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:* Apology

ii) Wednesday, November 6

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:* Crito

Week 10: Plato and the Soul

i) Monday, November 11 - guest lecture by Ben Morison?

- **LONG PAPERS DUE**
- *Topics:*
- *Reading:* selections from the Meno and Republic IV

ii) Wednesday, November 13

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:* selections from the Meno and Republic IV

Week 11: Introduction to Hellenistic Philosophy

i) Monday, November 18

- *Topics:*

ii) Wednesday, November 20

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:*

Week 12: Hellenistic Philosophy (continued)

i) Monday, November 25

- *Topics:*
- *Readings:*

ii) Wednesday, November 27

- **IN CLASS GROUP PRESENTATIONS**

Week 13: Virgil & Beyond

i) Monday, December 2

- *Readings:* Aeneid Bk IV

ii) Wednesday, December 4

- *Topics:* the Influence of Ancient Literature on the Modern World
- *Readings:* selections

Week 14

i) Monday, December 9

- *Exam Review and Office Hours*

ii) Wednesday, December 11

- **IN CLASS FINAL EXAM**

Assignments

Assignment I - Short Argument Analysis

You will be assigned a short argumentative passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In at least one page,

- Identify the conclusion of the argument and write it in your own words. Remember, this should be a full sentence.
- Identify the premises and write each of them in your own words. Be sure to write these in full sentences.
- Write a paragraph responding to the argument. Do the premises seem true to you? Do the premises support the conclusion?

Assignment II - Short Response Essay

You will be given a short, provocative statement, such as, “Death is not bad for the person who dies.” You must write a short essay (at least one page) either arguing for or against this statement.

Your essay must include an introductory paragraph, three paragraphs detailing the three strongest arguments for your position, and a concluding paragraph.

Assignment III - Short Argument Analysis

You will be assigned a short argumentative passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In at least one page,

- Identify the conclusion of the argument and write it in your own words. Remember, this should be a full sentence.
- Identify the premises and write each of them in your own words. Be sure to write these in full sentences.
- Write a paragraph responding to the argument. Do the premises seem true to you? Do the premises support the conclusion?

Assignment IV - Long Argument Analysis

You will be assigned a long (two or three page) argumentative passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In at least three pages,

- Identify the main conclusion of this argument. Write it in your own words.
- Identify the premises of the main argument and write each of them in your own words.
- Find a sub-argument for one of the premises. Write the conclusion of this sub-argument and each of its premises in your own words.
- Find a sub-argument for a different premise. Write the conclusion of this sub-argument and each of its premises in your own words.
- Write a paragraph responding to the main argument. Do the premises seem true? Are the premises that seem false supported by sub-arguments? Do the premises support the main conclusion?

Assignment V - Short Response Essay

You will be given a short, provocative statement, such as, "Death is not bad for the person who dies." You must write a short essay (at least one page) either arguing for or against this statement.

Your essay must include an introductory paragraph, three paragraphs detailing the three strongest arguments for your position, and a concluding paragraph.

Assignment VI - Long Response Essay

You will be given a two to three page argumentative passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In at least three pages, you must do three things: reconstruct Aristotle's argument in this passage, critique Aristotle's argument, and provide your own arguments either for or against Aristotle's conclusion.

Your essay must include an introductory paragraph, paragraphs presenting Aristotle's argument in your own words, paragraphs critically evaluating Aristotle's argument, paragraphs presenting your own arguments either for or against Aristotle's conclusion, and a concluding paragraph.

Revisions

We will consider, and remark, revisions on Assignments I-VI. These revisions must be submitted by the final class.