***CMPL65000/FLL63900/English66500: Teaching World Literature***

*Spring 2011*

*HEAV 111; TTh 3:00-4:15*

Charles Ross, Professor of English

*Office hours*: W 1:30-4:00, after class, or by appointment

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***Required Text***

* *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces,*  5th Continental Edition, available at Von’s Books.

***Related Web Site***

* *First Lines:* <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~rosscs/First%20lines/First%20Lines.htm>.
* Your text book is a guide. I will be supplementing it as we go along. Handouts are required reading and will be available on Blackboard.

***Course Description:***

This is a course in the close reading and appreciation of some of the most famous literary texts in the world, all of which were written when writing was the dominant medium (as opposed to speech or film, for example). We will be concentrating on texts rather than theory, giving you an opportunity to fill in gaps. We will also consider the problems but also the opportunities inherent in teaching the customary two semester sequence. Topics include the concept of masterpieces and the differences and similarities between world literature and Western literature.

***Course Goals:***

After finishing this course, you should know something about the major authors and forms of Western and world literature (drama, poetry, narrative, and non-fiction) from the beginnings until the nineteenth century. You should know something of the history of ancient Greece, Rome, the Mediterranean, Western Europe, and China. You should understand the difference between prose and verse, also have a sense of what it means for literature to be written in the high style, and understand the symbolic nature of literary language. This is not a course about how to construct a syllabus or devise fascinating assignments. If you know the material, the students will love you. Instruction in how to write papers is important in any literature course. To supplement this aspect of the course there will be two special Medieval Monday 12:30 meetings featuring Dorrie Armstrong.

***Course Methods:***

To read old texts is to enter different worlds, to escape the limits of our own time and place, to learn something about somewhere else. Were the people for whom these works written different from us? If so, can they possibly have anything to teach us today? How can we possibly understand them? To help us compare our own culture to the past, this course will try to develop three fields of inquiry: Translation, Customs, and Intentions. Focusing on **translation** helps us develop a sense of what it means to bring another language into English. To do this we will sometimes look at comparative translations and also at the original languages. Samples of the works in the original languages will be found at web project First Lines (which you can access via BOIARDO.COM). **Customs** are useful things to think about because they help us realize not only what others take for granted, but that are own behaviors do not necessarily follow universal standards of right and wrong. The issue of intentionality helps us understand what literary characters do. In general they either suffer and endure or take action. As modern people we believe in controlling our own destiny and therefore favor those works of art that show us the results of intentional acts (tragedy, for example), but literature often surprises us by representing forces beyond the control of humans. The nature of these forces, like the customs of diverse societies and the special magic of different languages, help us understand the developments that make us who we are today. I am especially interested in the connection between morality and mortality (from *Gilgamesh* to Keats’ *Ode to a Nightingale*).

This course asks you to spend your time reading literature rather than theory. I’m not unaware that we cannot escape theory when we think or write about literature, but in this course I want you to spend your time illustrating whatever theory you find yourself following. It is my belief that early literature teaches us how to read, and the explosion of national literatures in the 20th century, which I survey for you in the notes based on the Norton Anthology introductions (and please note my scorn at the end and the suggestion that you really should read *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*), nonetheless reveals how influentail, I’m afraid, English literature has been in the last century. Novels, plays, lyric poems, even films are, let us face it, all derivate genres. Steig Larson’s Lisbeth Salandar is another variation of Ulysses, the man of many wiles; so is Genji. For that reason whatever else happens in the course—and I do like to let things develop, as some of you know—I want you to read all of Homer, Ovid, and as much of the Bible as possible (Genesis, Exodus, Kings, Psalms, Job, Jeremiah, Isiah, Four Gospels, Acts). I’m giving you an extra day in January for that!

The syllabus therefore focuses on the earlier texts from the first half of a year-long survey, and then the earlier texts of the second half. That means we leave out Shakespeare and the 20th century, the masterpiece *Hamlet* and the enormously influentual *Macbeth* (think 18th-century Gothic, Harry Potter). This way I don’t have to choose between Hemingway, the more influential Faulkner, or Proust. There isn’t time to do *Madame Bovary* in class, but you will get some notes and should read it. You can always read Leavis’s *The Great Tradition* or *Nabokov on Literature*, or Auerbach’s *Mimesis*. Most of your know more some aspects of modern literature than I do (modern women writers, francophone, Arabic, etc.) and have your favorites, and you can use them as jumping off places for your term papers, but I would advise you to find a homology or similar theme in Homer and work forward from there. I don’t see older traditions creeping into our ken (as Chapman’s Homer appeared to Keats) except for older Chinese literature, which I suspect will redefine what we think should be covered in a world literature class. But I may be completely wrong. Anyway, it’s one of the issues I’m thinking about.

***Assignments:***

1. Your will take four midterm exams, based on exams that have been given to Purdue undergraduates. Lucky you, they will be take-home, not taken in class.

2. I have a lot to say about all the works, but I will try to put as much as possible on paper and leave time for discussions, since it is impossible to imagine your reading the assignments and not having something you want to say.

3. For that reason attendance is mandatory in this class. I know you are graduate students, but I expect you in class and participating. Bring a question or comment to every class.

4. The term paper. It has to at least touch the main works we discuss. It has to have a topic. It has to frequently look at different translations of any texts you discuss. It should be thematic, looking for ways to connect the works we read. It might help to structure it in sections: Ancient, Greek, Roman, Asian, medieval, Renaissance, Enlightenment, Romantic. I suggest starting with a really great example of a theme that you want to discuss. You may use 20th century or contemporary literature for this. Then head back into the past and around the world and find comparable or contrasting examples.

4. Some kind of project I haven’t figured out yet. I want you to do something intersting for the class, some kind of presentation, based on your own background or the theme you choose.

***More on the Term Paper:***

We will each try to select a theme, a topic such as you might use to organize your own course, and follow it through world literature as a basis for a long term paper. This paper will be somewhat expository, in that you will be required to cover the different periods and works, not all of which may apply with equal urgency to your topic. But it will also be argumentative, in that you will be making a case for a selection process based both on your chosen theme and the way various anthologies today justify the works they include in their various theoretical introductions. Your paper will position your interests in terms of the issue of choosing whether to use the term masterpieces, world literature, Western literature for a survey course. Combining a theme with research into the selection process of anthologies should give you a solid thesis, a subject and something to predicate on it. Work on this throughout the semester, roughly two pages per week. I’ll be asking to see what you have as we go along. That will give you 30 pages to revise before handing it in Tuesday of finals week.

*Purdue requires the following notice: “In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course.” To get information about changes, you can email me at rosscs@purdue.edu. I will be in contact by email based on the Blackboard or SIS class list.*

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***Teaching World Literature***

***Syllabus***

Jan. 11: *Gilgamesh* (in various editions of *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*)

[Jan. 13](file:///E:\266%20audio\266%20Jan%2011%2007.WMA): *Old Testament*, pp. 13-63.

Jan. 18: Homer’s *Iliad*, p. 64-93(get your own translation: Pope or E. V. Rieu; read the whole thing)

Jan. 20: *Iliad*, pp. 93-172

Jan. 25: *Odyssey*, pp. 172-246

Jan. 27: No class.

\*Feb 1: *Odyssey* (any translation; Fitzgerald in anthology is good, or Mandelbaum; read it all)

Feb. 3: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*

Feb. 8: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*

Feb. 10: Plato and Aristotle 431-458, and *The Repubic* (the allegory of the cave) (handout), 459-464

Feb. 15: Virgil, *Aeneid* 4 (best to read it all; Mandelbaum translation is great)

Feb. 17: Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (read all, but especially book 1 and book 10, plus pp. 547-579)

Feb. 22: New Testament, pp. 579-596 [plus Paul’s Epistles and Acts, a bit of Revelations]

Feb. 24: Petronius, pp. 595-616, Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 616-647

\*March 1: Kalidasa, *Sakuntala and the Ring of Recollection* (handout)

March 3: The Koran, pp. and *The Thousand and One Nights* (handout)

Mar. 8: T’ang Dynasty Poetry (on-line); Cao Xuequin, *Dream of Red Mansions* 红楼梦, chpt 37 (handout)

Mar. 10: Dante, *Inferno* 1-5, pp. 752-787

Mar. 13: Spring Break

Mar. 15: Spring Break

Mar. 22: Dante, pp. 788-958, *Inferno, Purgatorio*, *Paradiso*

Mar. 24: Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, pp. 958-985.

Marc. 29: *The Tale of Genji* (handout)

Mar. 31: Montaigne, pp. 1140-1176

\*April 5: King Arthur (handout) and Cervantes, pp. 1176-1215 and 1325-1330

April 7: Racine, *Phaedra*

April 12: *Reply to Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, pp. 1508-1542

April 14: Voltaire, *Candide*, pp.1542-1618

April 19: Goethe, *Faust*, pp.1619-1731

\*April 21: Chateaubriand, *Rene*, pp. 1731-1754

April 26: Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, pp. 1939-1989

?April 28: Wordsworth, “Tintern Abby”; Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale” (on-line)