Conversations of the West: Antiquity and the Nineteenth Century

M,W 12:30-1:45 PM, 19 West Fourth, Room 101

Professor John Chioles, Comparative Literature
Office hours: Mondays 10:30 AM to noon; Tuesdays 3:30 to 5 PM
19 University Place, 3rd floor, #318

Preceptors: Robyn Creswell, Daniel Lukes, Susan Matthias, Lydia Oram

ANTiquity AND THE NINeteenth CENTury

DESCRIPTION: This course deals, in the main, with the way the literary “means” in culture, and how it becomes manifest as an artistic expression, which sometimes survives to become “canonized.” It will provide an understanding of the basic genres in a broad fashion: Epic-narrative/Epic Poetry; Dramatic Poetry; Long Narrative-the Novel; and Critical-Philosophical expressions bordering on the artistic. Some emphasis will be given to “dramatic poetry” as both the original way of thinking in the ancient world, and the one “Word” expression with the closest affinity to contemporary and popular culture. The aim of the course will not be of a historical sweep, even though the readings mount progressively from “then to now.” The method of discussion and analysis will be culture-specific to the modern world; that is why each older text is coupled with a modern or contemporary one. The mode of thinking with the texts will be comparative (as is done in Comparative Literature). The goals of the course will be to learn about artistic expression in words, its logical means, as well as its fundamental ambiguity and open-endedness; its aim will be to explore some of the foundations of ancient, as well as early modernist (19th century) culture through reading and frequent writing about them.

Lectures will be designed around specific issues, problems, and passages of each work. There will be no summary of plot in class. As much as possible, a short amount of time will be set aside for discussion in each lecture session. Assigned reading should be completed by the due date for better comprehension of the material. Texts must be brought to class and to the preceptors’ sessions.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS: In-class midterm exam; one short paper (4 to 5 pages); final paper (6 to 8 pages); in-class final exam; one or two one-page response papers to be assigned by individual preceptors.

Each requirement will have the following weight in calculating overall grades:
Midterm: 20 percent
Short paper: 15 percent
Final paper: 25 percent
Final exam: 25 percent
Attendance, class participation, response papers: 15 percent

READINGS:

1. HOMER, Odyssey (Robert Fagles translation)
2. AESCHYLUS, Oresteia (U. of Chicago Press only)
3. SOPHOCLES, Oedipus
4. SOPHOCLES, Women of Trachis
5. EURIPIDES, Medea
6. EURIPIDES, Bacchae
7. PLATO, Phaedrus (Hackett, paper)
8. PLATO, Symposium
9. BIBLE, The Apocalypse
11. IBSEN, Four Major Plays
12. CONRAD, Heart of Darkness (Signet Classics)
13. MANN, Death in Venice

SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE
W 9/5: Introduction: Talk on early Greek writing

WEEK TWO
M 9/10: Introduction to Homer's Odyssey, read Books 1 to 6
W 9/12: Homer continued, read Books 7 to 12
Th, F 9/13, 9/14: Recitations, Homer Books 1 to 12

WEEK THREE
M 9/17: Homer continued, read Books 13 to 18
W 9/19: Homer completed, read Books 19 to 24
Th, F 9/20, 9/21: Recitations, Homer Books 13 to 24
WEEK FOUR
W 9/26: Conrad continued; *Apocalypse Now*
Th, F 9/27, 9/28: Recitations, *Heart of Darkness* (complete)

WEEK FIVE
M 10/1: Conrad continued; *Apocalypse Now*
Th, F 10/4, 10/5: Recitations, *Oresteia* (complete)

WEEK SIX
M 10/8: No class, Columbus Day celebrated
W 10/10: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, Hegel in *19th Century Philosophy*, pp. 40-87
Th, F 10/11, 10/12: Recitations: *Oedipus*, Hegel

WEEK SEVEN
M 10/15: IN-CLASS MIDTERM
(Additional reading: Sophocles, *Women of Trachis*); DISTRIBUTE PAPER TOPICS
Th, F 10/18, 10/19: Recitations: *Medea*, Nietzsche

WEEK EIGHT
W, 10/24: Euripides, *The Bacchae*; FIRST PAPER DUE
Th, F 10/25, 10/26: Recitations, *The Bacchae*

WEEK NINE
M 10/29: Mann, *Death in Venice* (related to *The Bacchae*)
W 10/31: Complete *Death in Venice*
Th, F 11/1, 11/2: Recitations, *Death in Venice*

WEEK TEN
M 11/5: Plato, *Phaedrus* (related to *Death in Venice*)
W 11/7: Plato, *Phaedrus*
Th, F 11/8, 11/9: Recitations, *Phaedrus*

WEEK ELEVEN
M 11/12: Plato, *Symposium* (related to *Death in Venice*)
W 11/14: *Symposium*
Th, F 11/15, 11/16: Recitations, *Symposium*
WEEK TWELVE
W 11/21: Complete viewing of film, *Death in Venice*
No recitations: Thanksgiving Holiday

WEEK THIRTEEN
W 11/28: Marx and Kierkegaard in *19th Century Philosophy*

WEEK FOURTEEN
M 12/3: Ibsen, *A Doll’s House*; FINAL PAPER DUE
W 12/5: Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*
Th, F 12/6, 12/7: Recitations, Ibsen

WEEK FIFTEEN
M 12/10: IN-CLASS FINAL
W 12/12: Last day of class