Foundations of Literature I: Epic and Drama  
Professor Cyrus R. K. Patell  
LITCW-AD 103  
Fall 2013 – 4.0 points  
Mondays and Wednesdays 9:55 – 11:10 a.m. / Location: DTC N-212  
Office: N-136 / E-Mail: cyrus.patell@nyu.edu  
Office Hours: W 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

SYLLABUS

Course Description

This course introduces students to two major genres of literature – epic and drama – and to fundamental terms and critical methods employed by literary scholars. Topics to be investigated include: the relationship between text and context; close vs. distant reading; the nature of authorship; genre; the interplay of local, national, regional, and world modes of categorization; translation; book history; and the relationship between literature and other forms of art. Each unit of the course is constructed around an anchoring text that will be contextualized both historically and generically through a wide range of primary and secondary readings. For Fall 2013, the anchoring texts are The Odyssey and King Lear.

Pre-Requisites: None.

Learning Outcomes

Students in the course will learn to: develop critical thinking and reading skills that are foundational for success in the Literature major; perform close formal analysis of texts; produce competent analytical essays; understand the relation of text to context and make connections among a variety of genres, periods, and cultural contexts; identify and analyze exemplary aspects of individual works. These outcomes will be assessed through reading reports, class participation, in-class exercises, and essays as described below.

Teaching and Learning Methodologies

This course adopts a seminar format that requires students to participate actively in class discussions. Considerable class time will be spent on the formal analysis of literary texts, which also be placed in relevant literary, intellectual, and historical contexts through required readings and material introduced during class time. The course makes use of an online site – NYUClasses – that will serve as a repository for required readings, assignments, and additional course materials. Class discussions will be supplemented by multimedia materials such as PowerPoint slides and video clips.

Assessment

Students must complete all assigned coursework in order to pass the course. All required papers and other documents must be submitted electronically. No extensions will be given.
on assignments or papers without sufficient extenuating circumstances and prior approval from the instructor.

**Reading Reports** (20%) – Students are required to submit, electronically, before the midnight preceding each class for which it is assigned, a 300-word reading report that discusses an *exemplary* moment from the work marked with an asterisk and makes a brief argument about why it is exemplary. Each report must conclude with two questions prompted by these discussions. In addition, you must find one example of the piece of figurative language or rhetoric assigned in the previous class and write a paragraph identifying the location of the item within the text and describing the textual effects that it creates. Reports will be assessed on the following basis: + / ✓ / –.

**Class Participation** (10%) – Students are expected to come to each class fully prepared, having read through or watched the texts or films assigned for the day’s class – *and thought about them carefully*. Participation will be assessed on the basis of both the regularity and the quality of contributions. Students will be asked to initiate class discussions without prior warning and may be asked to perform this function more than once. In-class exercises will be conducted in class without previous notice. If you are absent when an in-class exercise is given and do not have a written doctor’s excuse, you will receive a failing mark for that exercise. These exercises are designed to help students identify *exempla* for analysis within the day’s assignments and will be discussed in class. Your worst exercise grade will be dropped from the tabulation of your semester grade.

**Short Essay and Rewrite** (15%) – This essay (length: 1500 words) is designed to teach students how to perform close analyses of exemplary textual moments. Topics will be assigned.

**Final Essay** (25%) – Students will choose their own topics for the final essay (2,500 to 3,000 words), with topic proposals submitted in advance for critique and approval by the instructor.

**Examinations** (30%) – The midterm and final examinations are designed to give students the opportunity to synthesize the material and demonstrate broad, detailed knowledge of the texts and ideas covered in the course.

**In-Class Conduct**

Students are required to arrive punctually to each class; students arriving late without prior permission from the instructor may not be admitted, at the discretion of the instructor. Attendance will be taken at each class.

Students must silence cell phones before the start of class. The use of electronic devices in class is permitted only for the purpose of note-taking or consulting relevant e-texts. Students may not engage in non-class-related online activities during class.

Eating is not permitted during class, but you may bring a beverage.

*Revised 28 October*
Texts Ordered for the Course

Aristotle, Poetics (Penguin)
Anton Chekhov, Anton Checkhov’s Selected Plays (Norton Critical Edition)
Caryll Churchill, Cloud 9 (Theatre Communications Group)
David Damrosch, How to Read World Literature (Wiley-Blackwell) -- HRWL
Athol Fugard, Master Harold and the Boys (Vintage)
Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (Penguin)
James Joyce, Ulysses (Simon and Brown)
Russ Kick, ed. The Graphic Canon, Volume 1 (7 Stories Press)
Arthur Miller, Death of a Salesman (Penguin)
Molière, School for Wives, trans. Richard Wilbur (Mariner Books)
Wajdi Mouawad, Scorched, Revised Edition (Playwrights Canada Press)
Martin Puchner et al., eds., Norton Anthology of World Literature, Volumes A-F
William Shakespeare, King Lear (Third Series)
William Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew (Arden, Third Series)
Sophocles, The Theban Plays, trans. Ruby Blondell (Focus)
Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (Oxford, 150th Anniversary Edition)

Required Films

Anton Chekhov, Uncle Vanya (1991)
Akira Kurosawa, Ran (1985)

Additional Required Readings Available on NYUClasses

David Damrosch, Excerpts from What Is World Literature?
Stephen Greenblatt, “Culture”
Franco Moretto, “Conjectures on World Literature”

Required Online Viewing

Introduction to World Literature (IWA)
http://www.learner.org/courses/worldlit/

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND DISCUSSION TOPICS
[ * Indicates that a reading report is due.]

8/28 Introduction

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9/16 *The Bhagavad-Gita* (excerpts; Puchner Vol. A 1282–1301) *; watch before class IWA “5. The Bhagavad Gita.”

9/18 Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh* (excerpts; Puchner, Vol. B 182–206) *


9/25 Dante, *Inferno*


10/7 Joyce, *Ulysses* (selections)

10/9 Whitman, "[Song of Myself]"

**FALL BREAK**

10/20 *Short Paper Due*

10/21 Epic: Conclusion and Midterm Review

10/23 **MIDTERM EXAM:** Read Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature”

10/28 Shakespeare, *King Lear* *

10/30 Shakespeare, *King Lear*; Kick, 386–99; Folger Introduction (NYU Classes)

11/4 **HOLIDAY: New Year’s Day**

11/6 **Short Paper Rewrite Due by 5:00 p.m. via e-mail**


11/10 Make-up Class (11:35 a.m., Sama 1310): Aristotle, *Poetics*; Kurosawa, *Ran* (view film on your own before class);

11/11 Sophocles, *King Oidipous* (in *Theban Plays*; read relevant portions of introduction) *


11/20 Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

11/25 Molière, *School for Wives* *

11/27 Chekhov, *Uncle Vanya* *; watch film version before class

12/1 **Topic Proposal for Final Paper Due**

12/2 **HOLIDAY: UAE National Day**

12/4 Miller, *Death of a Salesman* *


12/11 Mouwad, *Scorched* *

12/12 **Final Paper Due**

12/15 **FINAL EXAM:** 1:00 – 4:00 p.m., DTC N-112

To prepare for the examination, read one of the following: