

World Literature I
English 2305
Fall Semester, 2009
Richard T. Gaughan
Course Syllabus

The purpose of World Literature I is to introduce you to some of the most important and influential texts of the ancient era, the medieval era, and the Renaissance. Since these works are much older than works you are likely familiar with, they will almost certainly seem strange and perplexing. That's okay. Most of these works are attempts to answer the most vexing and difficult questions about human life, like why humans must die, how good is different from evil, and what constitutes a good life. In other words, these stories are meant to be challenging. Most of the works we will be reading are recent translations, which will make the language a little more familiar than it might otherwise be, but the works are, in any language, dense and complex. We will work through them pretty slowly, but you must be prepared to read the works more than once and to read carefully. If you are confused about anything, you should not hesitate to raise questions in class. Note down any passages that defeat your best efforts at comprehension and ask about them. If you are confused by the works or the ideas discussed in class, explain what is bothering you. I assure you, you will not be alone in your confusion.

Most of class time will be devoted to discussing the texts in detail. I will try to explain them as best I can, but I will be relying heavily on student participation. For that reason, class attendance and participation are important and can influence your grade.

Texts: Valmiki, *The Ramayana*, trans. R. K. Narayan, Penguin.
Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, Farrar, Straus, Giroux
The Book of Job, Stephen Mitchell, trans. HarperCollins
Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, Dover.
Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. Fagles, Penguin
Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno*, trans. John Ciardi, Signet Classic
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Penguin.

Ancient Period

Valmiki, *The Ramayana*
Exam
Homer, *The Odyssey*, Books I-XII and XXI-XXIII
Exam
The Book of Job
Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone*
Plato, "The Apology," "The Crito," and "The Phaedo"

The Middle Ages

Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno* from *The Divine Comedy*
Exam

The Renaissance

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Final Exam

I may make some changes in the readings as the semester wears on, but, if I do, I will notify you well in advance.

There will be four exams. Some of the exams may involve identifying important passages from the works, but all of the exams will require you to write analytical and interpretive essays. Most of your final grade will be determined by these exams. I don't rely on a simple average of grades. I try to look at the overall performance and give credit for steady improvement. In addition to the exams, I may give unannounced quizzes to check on your comprehension of the reading assignments.

I expect regular attendance and participation. You may miss up to three classes without endangering your grade and your staying in the class. You can take these absences for any reason, good or bad. There is no such thing as an excused absence in my class. Any more than three absences may hurt your final grade or may result in my dropping you from the roll with a WF. See me immediately if you have any doubt about your status. Waiting will only make matters worse.

I do not tolerate plagiarism or cheating or dishonesty of any kind. If you cheat or plagiarize and I find out about it, I will fail you then and there. I don't give second chances.

I think "study guides" like "Cliff's Notes" are a waste of time and money. If they don't give you bad information, they might lead you to commit a form of plagiarism. **Don't Use Them.**

"The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need accommodation under this act due to a disability, contact the Office of Disability Support Services at 450-3416."

Since I invariably treat my students with consideration and respect, I expect courtesy and respect from my students. I will not tolerate any kind of behavior directed towards me or other students that interferes with the class. You will receive one, and only one, warning. After that, I will drop you from the class.

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You should familiarize yourself with the policies set forth in the Student Handbook, especially those concerning sexual harassment and academics (pages 93 and 25 respectively).