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Office Hours: T 9-10; W 10-11; Th.12:15-1:30

FYSP 109: Odysseys of Identity

Fall 2006

Purpose: In this course we will examine Homer's *Odyssey*, a fundamental text in the Western comic tradition that is nonetheless fascinating and even entertaining. Our purpose is not only to understand the *Odyssey* itself, however, but to engage with some of the later works that reflect, imitate, invoke, or respond to Homer's work. In other words, this is a class on the literary history of the *Odyssey*. Among the themes that we will examine at some length are: the relation between journey and comic narrative; the journey home as a form of self-identification; and the manipulation of both identity and narrative by untrustworthy narrators. By the end of the course, you should have a firm grasp of the *Odyssey* as an instigator of a literary mode, as well as a basic understanding of several critical approaches to such works, especially that of intertextuality.

Because this is a First Year Seminar, we will also devote considerable time and attention to developing your skills as a critical essayist. Even if you are already an accomplished writer, our goal is to push you towards writing at a professional level.

Grading: Your grade will be based on 3 papers each of which will have at least two drafts, a final project, and class participation, each weighted equally. Failure to complete any of the papers will result in a grade of NC/F in the course. Class participation will be based on your regular and consistent attendance and preparation to participate in discussion. Even if you are a naturally shy person, you will be encouraged to speak up; the quietest student can participate fully and meaningfully.

Papers: You will be placed into one of three paper-writing groups, and paper due dates will be staggered by group throughout the term. Part of our class time will be dedicated to discussion of paper drafts. This creates a tight grading schedule for me. As a result, I will not grant extensions for papers in this course; late papers will be graded down 2/3 letter grade for each day late (i.e. an A becomes an B+ after one day). The only exception to this rule will be a legitimate, documented medical or family emergency. The paper-writing schema will be explained in depth later.

Readings and Class time: Class will be spent discussing the reading for that day. I expect that you will come to class having read *and thought about* that day's assignment. If you fail to do this, discussions will be lackluster, your colleagues' comments will make little sense, and you will find yourself generally unhappy. A number of readings are on **E-Res** and/or the **Blackboard** site. These readings are integral to the course and *not* optional. The reading assignments are sometimes long, so plan ahead and give yourself time to *enjoy* reading them. Please bear in mind that the syllabus is provisional, and subject to change as we go along.

Attendance: For the duration of this semester and for the purposes of this class, we are a community of scholars. Please plan to attend every class session. If you miss class, it is your responsibility (not mine) to find out what you missed. A bit of friendly advice: students who come to class regularly and well-prepared tend to do better on papers. Ignore this fact at your peril. You should also note that regular, informed class participation counts for 20% of your grade.

Attendance, part II: Fall Break lasts one week. Your travel plans are not a sufficient excuse for missing class the day before or after break.

Academic Honesty: All Oberlin students should familiarize themselves with the Oberlin Honor Code: http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html. In this class, adherence to the honor code primarily means that you must cite sources appropriately in writing your papers. In the unlikely event that I find that a student is has engaged in academic dishonesty (cheating, helping other students to cheat, plagiarism) he/she will fail the course. I will also report the student to the Honor Board, as required by the Honor Code. An excellent discussion of plagiarism exists in the Honor Code.

Paper-writing schema:

After the first couple of weeks of class, you will be divided into three paper-writing groups.

In the first week, Group A will turn in the first draft of their papers on *Wednesday*. These papers will be posted electronically on the Blackboard site, and all class members will read these papers in preparation for class on Friday. Members of Group B will also *comment on* one paper each, and will *lead discussion* on that paper during Friday's class. (Friday's then, will be devoted to critiquing your work.)

In week 2, members of Group A will re-write their papers to hand in to me on Friday; I will then comment on them and grade them. Members of Group B will write their rough drafts (due *Wednesday*); Group C will lead comment on and lead discussion of Group B's papers on Friday.

In week 3, Group B re-writes their papers to hand in to me; Group C writes rough drafts; Group A leads discussion of Group C's papers.

In week 4, Group C re-writes, Group A writes, Group B comments, and the cycle begins all over again.

As you can tell from this schema, you will be writing or re-writing 2 out of three weeks, and the third week, you'll be commenting on someone else's writing. This is labor-intensive, but I have found that it is one of the most effective ways to work on the elements of composition. You will leave this class a better essayist than when you came in.

Texts (please read the translations I have selected):

The Odyssey trans. R. Lattimore

The Golden Ass trans. E.J. Kenney

The Penelopiad, Margaret Atwood

The Life of Pi, an Martel

O Pioneers, Willa Cather

Assorted essays, reviews, and short stories on E-Res and/or Blackboard

Syllabus

Sept. 6	Introductions; Discussion of class expectations and syllabus; Useful advice	
8	<i>Odyssey 1-4</i>	
11	<i>Odyssey 5-8</i> E-Res: <i>from Knox, "Introduction" to Fagles' translation of the Odyssey</i>	
13	<i>Odyssey 9-12;</i>	
15	<i>Odyssey 13-16</i>	
18	<i>Odyssey 17-20;</i> E-Res: Walcott: "Odysseus and the Art of Lying"	
20	<i>Odyssey 21-24</i> Web: Tennyson, "Ulysses"	Group A rough draft 1 due
22	Discussion of Group A papers	
25	E-Res: Winkler: "Penelope's Cunning and Homer's"	
27	Atwood, <i>Penelopiad</i> , ch.s 1-13	Group B rough draft 1 due
29	Discussion of Group B papers	Group A final draft 1 due
Oct. 2	No Class -- Yom Kippur	
4	<i>Penelopiad</i> ch.s 14-end E-Res: Foley, "Reverse Similes and Sex Roles in the <i>Odyssey</i> "	Group C rough draft 1 due
6	Discussion Group C of papers	Group B final draft 1 due
Sunday, Oct. 8	Special Showing of <i>After Hours</i>	
9	Discussion of <i>After Hours</i>	
11	Blackboard: Kafka "Before the Law" Web: At least 3 reviews of <i>After Hours</i> , including: Roger Ebert, Emmanuel Levy, Vincent Canby (NYT)	
13	E-Res: Borges, "The City of the Immortals"	Group C final draft 1 due
Oct 16-20	No Class -- Fall Break	
23	Martel, <i>Life of Pi</i> , part 1 (120 pages!)	

25	<i>Life of Pi</i> , chs. 37-56	Group A rough draft 2 due
27	Discussion of Group A papers	
30-	<i>Life of Pi</i> , chs. 57-88	
Nov. 1	<i>Life of Pi</i> , chs. 89-94	Group B rough draft 2 due
3	Discussion of Group B papers	<i>Group A final paper 2 due</i>
6	<i>Life of Pi</i> , 95-end	
8	E-Res: Assorted reviews of <i>The Life of Pi</i> ; Prince, "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee"	Group C rough draft 2 due
10	Discussion of papers	<i>Group B final paper 2 due</i>
13	<i>The Golden Ass 1-3</i>	
15	<i>Golden Ass 4-6</i>	Group A rough draft 3 due
17	Kirk in Indiana; Discussion of papers	<i>Group C final draft 2 due</i>
20	<i>Golden Ass 7-9</i>	
22	<i>Golden Ass 10-11</i>	
24	No Class -- Day after Thanksgiving	
27	Topic TBA	
29	Cather, <i>O Pioneers</i>	Group B rough draft 3 due
Dec. 1	Discussion of papers	<i>Group A final draft 3 due</i>
4	Cather, <i>O Pioneers</i>	
6	Cather, <i>O Pioneers</i> E-Res: Ovid, "Pyramis and Thisbe"	Group C rough draft 3 due
8	Discussion of papers	<i>Group B final draft 3 due</i>
Sunday, Dec. 10	Special showing of <i>O Brother Where Art Thou</i> . Time and place TBA	
11	Web: Three reviews of <i>O Brother Where Art Thou</i>	
13	Last day of Class; The Truth Revealed	<i>Group C final draft 3 due</i>
15-17	Reading Period	
Dec. 18	9:00 am scheduled Final Exam Period: Final project due	