**QUEENS COLLEGE/CUNY**

Department of Comparative Literature

CMLIT 101W-Global Lit II

Section Code: 008 (26904)

Fall 2022

Prof. Michael Skafidas, PhD

E-mail: Michael.Skafidas@qc.cuny.edu

Office: Queens Hall, 265B

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***Gods, Heroes and the Quest for Redemption:***

***Reading the Epic, Learning the Craft of Writing***

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In this fully online course, you will learn to read critically, think analytically, and write effectively. The writing component of the course is designed to increase your knowledge of the grammar and mechanics of Standard English, expand your vocabulary, and improve your analytical skills. The reading component will help you comprehend and evaluate foundational works of literature, as well as understand the evolution of literature in history, the progress from verse to prose and the various literary genres. Our readings will include literary masterpieces of different cultural backgrounds covering the time span from the antiquity to the Renaissance. One of your tasks would be to follow the sequence of comparing and contrasting themes and motifs that emerge from all assigned texts.

Our course begins with the story of Gilgamesh, the legendary king of Uruk and hero of the Sumerian epic poem, which is the oldest poem found. As we will discuss, the distant past holds the key to the present and as a representative literary expression of the past, the Epic constitutes at the same time a written testimony of the ancient world and a pillar of literary tradition. We will then examine the parallels between ancient epics of heterogeneous cultural backgrounds and periods and turn our attention to the Homeric epics. We will read and discuss the characteristics of Homer and his timebefore we immerse into *The Odyssey*, which will be read in its entirety. Epics are a growth of centuries and reflect eternal themes separated by continents, languages or centuries: an adventurous man’s departure, his pursuit of a heroic identity under the auspices of a divine authority and his ultimate hope to fulfill a heroic destiny. We will further consider sections of Dante’s *Inferno*, the medieval masterpiece that symbolically stands in the middle between the distant past of the Epic and the modern world. Finally, we will conclude our verse cycle with modern interpretations of the Homeric journey by seminal poets such as C. P. Cavafy, Walt Whitman and Derek Walcott.

**Course Objectives**

\*This foundational course aims at acquainting students with a collection of canonical texts primarily from the ancient period. Our objective is to read and understand major works that are essential to develop a sense of literary progression. Whether a student’s objective is to succeed in the Humanities, Science, or Economics, the key to knowledge and success is to develop a sense of intellectual history through a critical reading of foundational literary works. Furthermore, it is of vital importance that a modern reader perceives connections between these literary milestones and the texts of modernity.

\*This is a writing-intensive course that further aims to develop a student’s ability to deliver correct, coherent and creative academic writing. **Grammar, syntax, vocabulary, punctuation and spelling** are as crucial as the ability to conceptualize and transmit to the page one’s thoughts, findings and conclusions. It remains also crucial the ability of the student to comprehend and draw ideas and inspiration from major works without plagiarizing their authors’ findings and conclusions. You will be encouraged to think critically and produce fully developed essays reflecting upon the required reading of the course.

In your reading list, I included your REQUIRED grammar textbook ***Plain Style*** that you should consult assiduously, especially when writing.

**In-Class rules, Participation and Technology policy**

**Computer Requirements**

* Internet Connection
* **Active computer audio & camera**
* Access to Blackboard

**Blackboard**

This course will be delivered fully online through Blackboard.

To access this course on Blackboard you will need access to the Internet and a supported Web browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari). To ensure that you are using a supported browser and have required plug-ins please run the Browser Check from your Blackboard course. Refer to the Blackboard Browser Tune-up page for instructions.

In this class, we will work both synchronously and asynchronously.

Students will be asked to interact digitally for exercises and assignments on a regular basis. Readings, notes, exercises, assignments, films, Power Points, exam reviews will be posted on Blackboard regularly. There will be at least one online assignment and/or a Discussion topic once a week. There will be a synchronous meeting once a week, unless otherwise instructed.

Each online assignment and/or discussion forum counts as attendance. When we meet virtually on Bboard Collaborate you are encouraged to join the meeting on time with your camera ON.

**Participation**

Participation is essential for you to do well in this online course. Each online assignment counts as attendance. Missing more than 3 online assignments (3 attendance points) and discussion boards will seriously affect your grade. Missed expired online assignments are not accepted and cannot be made up.

Please note, however, that students will not be penalized for religious, pregnancy- or childbirth-related absences. Please inform me about absences related to pregnancy, childbirth, religious observation or verifiable illness.

**PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE IN VIRTUAL CLASSES**

Please join the scheduled meetings on time and remain till the end of the session to receive a full attendance point, but also to keep notes as most of the lectures/reports/announcements shared and discussed in live classes will not be repeated in writing on Black Board. Also, please note that in order to create a sense of community in our live sessions it is important we are **all ON CAMERA** for the duration of the meeting. It is imperative we see the faces of people we work with in real life, why would live meetings, under the circumstances, be any different? If you are experiencing problems with your computer’s camera, please try to resolve them. Also, please note that our meetings WILL NOT be recorded.

**COMPUTER**

Please ensure promptly your audio and camera features work properly on your computer prior to our first synchronous session. You can borrow a fully equipped working laptop from CUNY should you need one.

**OFFICE HOURS**: TH 2:00-3:00PM

You may contact me during my office hour or by appointment on Black Board Collaborate.

**SYNCHRONOUS MEETINGS**

**We will be meeting synchronously (live) every Thursday at the allotted time (with the exception of TH, 8/25).**

**We will be working asynchronously every Tuesday.**

**FIRST SYNCHRONOUS (LIVE) MEETING: TH SEPTEMBER 1**

**FIRST ASYNCHRONOUS SESSION: AUGUST 25**

**Course Requirements and Information**

Learning Goals

* Increased ability to interpret meaning in literary texts by paying close attention to an author’s choices of detail, vocabulary, and style
* Ability to discuss the relationship between different genres of literary texts and the multicultural environments from which they spring
* Increased confidence in offering a critical evaluation and appreciation of a literary work’s strengths and limitations
* Increased confidence in the oral presentation of ideas
* Increased ability to write critical essays employing a strong thesis statement, appropriate textual citations, and contextual and intertextual evidence for their ideas

**Queens College General Education Statement:** This course satisfies the World Cultures and Global Issues (WCGI) requirement of the Pathways General Education Flexible Core.

All Flexible CORE Courses must satisfy the following three learning outcomes:

FC 1: Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.

FC 2: Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.

FC 3: Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.

In Addition, all WCGI courses must satisfy at least three of the following learning outcomes:

WCGI 1: Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring world cultures or global issues, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, ethnic studies, foreign languages (building upon previous language acquisition), geography, history, political science, sociology, and world literature.

WCGI 2: Analyze culture, globalization, or global cultural diversity, and describe an event or process from more than one point of view.

WCGI 3: Analyze the historical development of one or more non-U.S. societies.

WCGI 4: Analyze the significance of one or more major movements that have shaped the world's societies.

WCGI 5: Analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies.

**Papers, Presentations and Exams**

**The main five (5) assignments are as follows:**

1. Three papers (details to be discussed in class)
2. A mid-term exam covering the material up to that point
3. A final exam
4. Online Writings (approximately 600-800 words weekly)/Online Discussions
5. Online oral reports (details of oral reports to be discussed in our class meeting)

**Essays must be typed, double-spaced, carefully proofread and delivered on time in print form.**

\*I am certain that all of you are aware of the disastrous consequences of **plagiarism**. Nowadays it is easily detectable, it ruins students’ records, and, above all, it deprives the student from the pleasure of shaping a personal perspective. The world needs *your* personal perspective. Approach learning as pleasure and be yourself. Consult me as much as you need if you are not sure about an assignment and be confident that your original ideas and thoughts will take you much farther than you think.

**INTEGRITY STATEMENT**

Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses.

**Cheating**is the attempted or unauthorized use of materials, information, notes, study aids, devices or communication during an academic exercise. Examples include but are not limited to:

·   Copying from another student during an examination or allowing another to copy your work

·   Unauthorized collaborating on a take home assignment or examination

·   Using unauthorized notes during a closed book examination

·   Using unauthorized electronic devices during an examination

·   Taking an examination for another student

·    Asking or allowing another student to take an examination for you

·    Changing a corrected exam and returning it for more credit

·    Submitting substantial portions of the same paper to two classes without consulting the second instructor

·    Preparing answers or writing notes in a blue book (exam booklet) before an examination

·    Allowing others to research and write assigned papers including the use of commercial term paper services

**Plagiarism**is the act of presenting another person's ideas, research or writing as your own, such as:

·   Copying another person's actual words without the use of quotation marks and footnotes (a functional limit is four or more words taken from the work of another)

·   Presenting another person's ideas or theories in your own words without acknowledging them

·    Using information that is not considered common knowledge without acknowledging the source

·    Failure to acknowledge collaborators on homework and laboratory assignment

My policy is to give a failing grade to any assignment that has been plagiarized or an exam in which you have cheated. In addition, I am required by College policy to submit a report of suspected academic dishonesty to the Office of the Dean of Students. This report becomes part of your permanent file.

**Evaluation:**

First Term Paper 10% of the grade

Second Term Paper 10% of the grade

Third Final Paper 15% of the grade

Midterm exam 15% of the grade

Final exam 20% of the grade

Oral report 10%of the grade

Online assignments 20% of the grade

No incompletes (except in the event of verifiable emergency) or extra credit assignments.

**Contact:** You may reach me at the email address stated above. Please do so whenever you have a question, a comment, or a request to see me. I am always available to see you by appointment on Bboard Collaborate.

**Etiquette**

Effective communication with your professors is essential to college success. It is also vital preparation for entering the workforce, where this same skill set will serve your career. Craft your email requests to professors with care: pay close attention to word choice, sentence structure, concision, clarity, grammar, and especially tone. Always use an appropriate honorific (“Professor,” “Doctor”) as a form of address, and always end with a signature (“Sincerely”). Unless you have been instructed otherwise, use your professor's last name--spelled correctly--in the greeting. Email during business hours, and only if you cannot find an answer to your query elsewhere. Check the syllabus! Do not send late or unsolicited work. If there are concerns you’d like to share with your professor, doing so in person, in a timely manner (as your concerns arise), is always best.

**Required Texts:**

These are the **FOUR** books you are required to buy. All other readings will be provided by me digitally.

* *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Penguin Classics(translation by N. K. Sandars)*,* ISBN-6513: 978-0140441000/ISBN-10: 014044100X
* Homer, *The Odyssey*, Norton & Company, 2017 (translation by Emily Wilson)
* Edith Hall, *The Return of Ulysses: A Cultural History of Homer’s Odyssey*, John

Hopkins University Press, 2008

* Christopher Lasch, *Plain Style: A Guide to Written English*, Penn

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1:**

\*Introduction to course

\*Skafidas, *Effective Reading, Readable Writing*

-Great Writing, Critical Reading, how to read and write effectively

-Improving/expanding vocabulary

-Categories of Writing/Literary Genres

-Forms of language, Verse and Prose

-Figurative Language

\*Origins of literature

\*How to read ancient literature today

\*What is the Epic? Why it matters? A brief history of the epic: from *Gilgamesh* (early Third Millennium B.C.)to Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1660s A.D.)

\*Begin reading ***Gilgamesh*:** Introduction and main text

**Week 2:**

\**Gilgamesh*

\*Oral tradition and roots of the early Epic

\*Main characteristics, themes and motifs of the Epic

\*Heroic Identity

\*The distance from *hubris* to redemption

\*Historical value of the epic

\*Skafidas, *Notes on the Early Literature/Memory and Time in Literature*

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\*Basic Elements of Writing: Grammar, Syntax, Structure

\*The art of reading and reviewing literature

\*What is Imagery?

\*Skafidas, *Comparison and Contrast, Imagery and Symbolism in the Epic*

\*How to expand your vocabulary and improve your performance in English

\*Understanding the premises of Rising Action, Climax and Falling Action

Lasch: Chapter 3, “Characteristics of Bad Writing”

**Week 3:**

\**Gilgamesh*

\*Skafidas, *What is Hubris?*

\*Symbolism in the Epic; Ideal Friendship, Heroic Love

\*Defining the boundaries between mortality and immortality

\*The illusion of immortality

\*Who are the Sumerians?

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\*Discuss First Term Paper

\*Skafidas, *The Story of Writing:* *When Did Writing Begin?*

\*How to write a successful essay

-Developing an idea while responding to an author’s ideas and themes

-Generating Ideas; Narrowing a topic

-Thesis statement; Topic Sentence

-How to create topic sentences and thesis statements

\*Lasch, Chapter 1 “Elementary Principles of Literary Construction”

**Week 4:**

\*Introduction to Homer and the *Odyssey*

\*Skafidas, *Reading Homer, Understanding Humanity*

\*Book Introduction by Emily Wilson, pages 1-79

\*The *Odyssey*, Chapter 1-4, a mini epic within the epic

\*What is *Medias Res*?

\*Who is Homer?

\*Hospitality: support and respect to all strangers in the ancient world

\*Divine intervention: the driving force of the epic

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\*Comparing and contrasting: How to write about two books or two themes in one paper

\*Crafting a confident paper: the principles of argumentation and persuasion

**Week 5:**

\**The Odyssey*, Chapters 5-10

\*Ring Composition

\*Homeric Epithets

\*Cunning versus Violence

\*Homer’s influence on the Western Imagination

\*Edith Hall *The Return of Ulysses*, Chapter 1, “Embarkation”

-What is Intertextuality?

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\*Lasch: Chapter 2, Punctuation, Capitalization, Typography

\*The art of reading and reviewing literature

**Week 6:**

\**The Odyssey*, Chapters 11-18

*\*The Return of Ulysses*, Chapter 15, “Dialogue with Death”

\*The Underworld in the epic tradition

\*What is *nekyia*?

\***First Paper due October 11**

**Week 7:**

\*Feedback on First Term Paper

\*How to revise a paper

\*Lasch, Chapter 4, “Words Often Misused”

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\**The Return of Ulysses*, Chapter 9, “Women’s Work”

\*The influence of the *Odyssey* on subsequent literature: from Odysseus to Ulysses

\*Screening of film related to the *Odyssey*

**\*Course overview for midterm**

**Weeks 8-9:**

\*The *Odyssey*, Chapters 19-24

\*Conclusion of the epic

\*Role of women.

-Penelope’s loom and the ancient feminine tradition of patience and waiting

-Athena’s favorite epic male and the emancipation of a goddess

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**\*Midterm Exam: October 27**

**Week 10:**

\*The Sea, the Journey, the Island: the overarching elements of *The Odyssey*

\*In this session, we will examine the notion of the sea as a mirror of humanity and explore the various allegorical interpretations of Ithaca (originally Odysseus’ unassuming island) in the works of modern poets such as Constantine Cavafy

\*Skafidas,*The Allure of Ithaca*

\**The Return of Ulysses*, Chapter 12, “Exile from Ithaca”

\*Cavafy, “Ithaca”

**Week 11:**

\*Medieval imagination and the legacy of Ulysses

\*Dante: *Inferno* (Selections)

\*Odysseus’ reappearance in the Middle Ages: Canto 26 of Dante’s *Inferno*

**\*Second Paper Due, November 8**

**Weeks 12-13:**

\*Modern literary interpretations of the Homeric journey and the return of the hero

\*C. P. Cavafy

\*Walt Whitman

\*Derek Walcott

\*Thomas Wolfe, *You Can’t Go Home Again* (Selections)

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\*Discussion of final paper

**Week 14:**

\*Course overview in preparation for final exam.

\*Course highlights

**Week 15:**

**\*Final Paper TBA**

**\*Final Exam TBA**

**NO CLASS DATES:**

SEPTEMBER: 27, 29

OCTOBER 4: 25

THANKSGIVING