

## READINGS IN WORLD LITERATURE: THE EPIC

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to epic poetry and, more broadly, to the study of the Humanities. We will examine epic texts from different times and cultures in order to develop your skills in textual analysis, critical thinking, and expository writing. In our readings, we will pay particular attention to poetic and narrative form as well as the cultural values, social hierarchies, and existential anxieties articulated in the texts. On the one hand, this will allow us to consider how notions of death, power, and sexuality shift culturally and historically. On the other, we will be able to think about the relevance of these texts for our present day—and recognize that which is “epic” among us.

### COURSE READINGS:

The following books should be purchased. Copies are available at the Seminary Co-op.

1. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Penguin Classics, trans. Andrew George), ISBN 9780140449198.
2. *The Odyssey* (Penguin Classics, trans. Robert Fagles), ISBN 9780143039952.
3. *The Mahabharata* (trans. J. Smith, Penguin, 2009), ISBN: 978-0140446814.
4. *The Beast: Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail* (trans. Daniela María Ugaz and John Washington), ISBN: 1781682976.

### REQUIREMENTS:

---

#### 1. PREPARATION

On average, I would anticipate the need to allot at least two hours per class session to reading and preparation. You should take notes (whether marginal or in a separate notebook), keep track of personal and place names, look up unfamiliar words, and mark interesting passages.

Starting from Week 2, you are requested to make **a short post** (150-200 words) on the Canvas “Discussions” thread. You will be divided into two groups. Group 1 postings are due by **11:59pm on Mondays**, Group 2 postings by **11:59pm on Wednesdays**. These posts will help you think of potential material for in-class discussion and allow you to keep track of ideas and keywords that you find interesting and may develop in your papers. The posts can be about a keyword you would like to develop, a specific passage that you would like to suggest for close reading, or any other idea related to the assigned readings for that given day—feel free to get creative. In any case, your post should contain a **precise reference to the passages they relate to** (page number in the book).

#### 2. ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance and participation are essential. You are expected to attend the online sessions during which we will hold our class discussions. In addition to regular attendance, this course requires thoughtful reading of assigned texts and active participation in class discussions. In addition to our scheduled meetings on Monday and Wednesday, this course will also require your participation in at least **three writing seminars** conducted by our

writing specialist. Please note that these seminars are **mandatory** parts of the course and **are not optional**.

### 3. TERM PAPERS

The course requires **one shorter essay** of 2 pages on *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and **three short essays** of 3-4 pages, one each on of our other three texts. Additional research for these papers is **neither expected nor required**, but you must provide full bibliographic information for all sources used, whether you cite them directly or merely consult them in your work on the paper. I prefer the MLA Citation Style (8<sup>th</sup> Edition). If you are unfamiliar with this citation style, please see:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/mla\\_style](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style)

Use double space and 12pt Times New Roman with one-inch margins. Include your name, my name, and the course number at the top. Always give your paper a substantial title. Your paper should include page numbers at the bottom of each page. You are required to turn in **your paper electronically on CANVAS—assignments sent over email will not be accepted**.

#### **BREAKDOWN OF GRADES:**

Attendance & Participation %25

Term Papers %75 (%25 each)

### **COURSE POLICIES**

---

#### **1. ACCOMMODATIONS**

**Your success in this class is important to me.** We all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

If you have a documented disability (**or think you might have a disability**) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in complete course requirements or benefit from the University's programs or services, please contact **Student Disability Services** as soon as possible. To receive an accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with Student Disability Services. Please contact the office at **773-702-6000** or **disabilities@uchicago.edu**, or visit the website at <http://disabilities.uchicago.edu>.

#### **2. UNEXCUSED ABSENCES**

You are allowed **one unexcused absence** per quarter. Additional absences will result in the loss of 3.33 points off of your final grade. If you find yourself facing a major illness, family emergency, or other situation that threatens to affect your ability to attend and participate in the class, it is crucial that you get in touch with me as soon as possible. Please note that after any absence, it is your responsibility to talk with classmates about what you missed so that you will be well prepared for the next class.

#### **3. LATE SUBMISSION**

It is your responsibility to submit each writing assignment by its due date and time. If you turn in your term paper late, it will be marked down **half a letter grade** for every day it is late.

#### **4. PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**

Acts of plagiarism are serious violations of university policy. Taking the words of others and passing them off as your own undermines both your learning process and the academic community of which you are a member. If you are caught plagiarizing you will receive a failing grade for this course and further administrative action may be taken. To avoid plagiarism you must give credit to the proper sources for any ideas that are not your own and avoid turning in papers written for another class.

#### **5. QUESTIONS:**

If you have any questions, **do not hesitate to “visit” me in office hours**, which will be held on Zoom M/W 3:50-4:40pm CDT. If you cannot come to my office hours because of a scheduling conflict or time zone difference, we can always arrange to meet at another time.

### **COURSE CALENDAR**

(Please note that the due dates for papers are provisional and will be updated)

#### Week 1

September 30            Wed            Introduction

#### Week 2

October 5                Mon            *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, “Introduction,” pp. xiii-xxxii  
Tablets I-III, pp.1-30  
Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (excerpt)

October 7                Wed            *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablets IV-IX, pp. 30-70  
“From Tablet to Translation,” 209-221

#### Week 3

October 12               Mon            *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablets IV-IX, pp. 30-70

October 14               Wed            *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablets IX-XII, pp. 70-100  
**Gilgamesh Assignment due  
and Paper #1 (Odyssey) assigned**

#### Week 4

October 19               Mon            *The Odyssey*, Books 1-5, pp. 77-168  
‘Introduction’, 1-28

October 21               Wed            *The Odyssey*, Books 6-10, pp. 168-249

#### Week 5

October 26	Mon	<i>The Odyssey</i> , Books 11-15, pp. 249-338
October 28	Wed	<i>The Odyssey</i> , Books 16-20, pp. 338-410
<u>Week 6</u>		
November 2	Mon	<i>The Odyssey</i> , Books 21-24, pp. 410-489
November 4	Wed	<i>The Mahabharata</i> , 'Introduction': xi-xxi, xxxiv-xlvi, lxx-lxx; 'The Beginnings,' 1-83
<b>Paper #1 (Odyssey) due and Paper #2 (Mahabharata) assigned</b>		
<u>Week 7</u>		
November 9	Mon	<i>The Mahabharata</i> , 'The Hall', pp. 84-163
November 11	Wed	<i>The Mahabharata</i> , 'Savitri' and 'The Taking of the Earrings', pp. 214-241; 'Virata', pp. 243-292
<u>Week 8</u>		
November 16	Mon	'The Sermon of the Blessed Lord', pp. 353-366 'The Killing of Bhishma', pp. 367-412 'The Duel with the Clubs', pp. 549-562
November 18	Wed	'The Women', pp. 582-596 'The Great Journey' and 'Ascent to Heaven', pp. 771-791.
<b>Paper #2 (Mahabharata) due and Paper #3 (Beast) assigned</b>		
<u>Week 9</u>		
November 23	Mon	THANKSGIVING BREAK (NO CLASS)
November 25	Wed	THANKSGIVING BREAK (NO CLASS)
<u>Week 10</u>		
November 30	Mon	<i>The Beast</i> , 'Foreword', Ch. 1,2,3 (1-67)
December 2	Wed	<i>The Beast</i> , Ch. 4,5,6,7 (67-143) + Conclusion <b>Paper #3 (Beast) due <u>DECEMBER 11TH</u></b>

Prof. Sophie Salvo  
[ssalvo@uchicago.edu](mailto:ssalvo@uchicago.edu)

Office Hours:

M 11am-12pm; F 9-10am, Zoom (sign up via Calendly)

Writing Specialist: Anne Marie Smith  
[amsmith2@uchicago.edu](mailto:amsmith2@uchicago.edu)

## **READINGS IN WORLD LITERATURE AUTOBIOGRAPHY/Writing THE SELF**

Winter 2023

### **Course Description:**

This course will examine the nature of autobiographical writing from a wide range of cultural and historical contexts. While last quarter focused on the genre of the epic—texts that imagine and even create a people’s sense of a shared past and a shared culture—this quarter will focus on how individuals imagine their own, particular lives. We will explore, among other issues, how the self is constructed through reading and writing, the relationship between memory and identity, the claims of authenticity, the oscillation between interior and exterior life, and the peculiarities of individual voice.

### **Course Readings:**

Available at the Seminary COOP bookstore:

- 1) Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Sarah Ruden (ISBN 0812986482)
- 2) Sei Shonagon, *The Pillow Book* (Penguin Classics ; ISBN0140448063)
- 4) Wole Soyinka, *Ake: The Years of Childhood* (Vintage; ISBN-13: 978-0679725404)
- 5) Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Mariner Books; ISBN-10: 0618871713)
- 6) Michel de Montaigne, *Essays* (Penguin: ISBN: 9780140446029))

Available on Canvas: Rousseau, *Confessions* (Books I and II)

## Requirements and Grading

Class participation:	30%
Paper 1 (3-4 pages):	20%
Paper 2 (3-4 pages):	25%
Paper 3 (3-4 pages):	25%

## Important Information

- **Participation:** Please come to class with ideas and questions about the assigned reading. To do this most effectively, I encourage you to **annotate** your texts and **take notes** while you read.
  - A few times throughout the quarter, I will ask you to complete **short response assignments** (see schedule below).
- **Papers** should be written in 12-point font with 1-inch margins in Times New Roman. On days that papers are due, please upload your essay to our Canvas site. **There will be a penalty on all written assignments turned in late.**
  - Over the course of the quarter, you may take **one 48-hour extension**, no questions asked. Simply leave a note in the text box for the assignment in Canvas indicating that you're using an extension. You do not need to ask permission to use these extensions, but you are responsible for clearly stating that you're using one.
- You are required to attend **all writing seminars** led by your writing instructor.

## Course Calendar

### Week 1

January 3 Introduction; Augustine, *Confessions*

January 5 Augustine, *Confessions*: Books I-IV

### Week 2

January 10 Augustine, *Confessions*: Books V-VII

\* **Canvas Posting** (due 1/11 before midnight): Discuss the characterization of Augustine's mother, Monica. How is she portrayed in the *Confessions*? How should we understand her function in the text? (250 words)

January 12 Augustine, *Confessions*: Books VIII-X  
**Paper #1 assigned**

### Week 3

\* **At-Home Exercise**: For three days in a row, please write a short autobiographical text in one of the styles of the *Pillow Book*. Please bring to class on **THURSDAY**

January 17 Sei Shonagon, *The Pillow Book* (Introduction and p. 1-85)

January 19 Sei Shonagon, *The Pillow Book* (p. 85-174)

### Week 4

January 24 Sei Shonagon, *The Pillow Book* (p. 174-256)

January 26 Rousseau, *Confessions* (Book 1)  
**Paper #1 due**

### Week 5

January 31 Rousseau, *Confessions* (Book 2)  
**Paper #2 assigned**

\* **Assignment**: Choose your favorite sentence from one of Montaigne's essays. Write it out or type it up and bring it to class on February 2.

February 2 Montaigne, *Essays*: "To the Reader"; "On idleness"; "On the power of the imagination"; "On cannibals"; "On the custom of wearing

clothes”

Week 6

February 7 Montaigne, *Essays*: “On Experience” (please read the entire essay)

February 9 Montaigne, *Essays*: “On Experience,” continued.

Week 7

February 14 Soyinka, *Ake*: Chapters 1-5 (p. 1-76)  
**Paper #2 Due**

\* **Canvas Posting** (due 2/15 before midnight): Write one **analytical** question about Chapters 6-10 of *Aké* (that is, a question that can be addressed by interpreting the text, rather than by knowing the author's intention or conducting outside research). Please: 1.) post your question on Canvas; 2.) also post a list of potential passages (at least 2) for which this question is relevant; 3.) bring your question and list of passages to class.

February 16 Soyinka, *Ake*: Chapters 6-10 (p. 77-160)  
**Paper #3 Assigned**

Week 8

February 21 Soyinka, *Ake*: Chapters 11-15 (p. 161-230)

\* **Canvas Posting** (due 2/23 before midnight): How should we understand the relationship between words and images in Bechdel's text? (250 words)

February 23 Bechdel, *Fun Home* (p. 1-120)

Week 9

February 28 Bechdel, *Fun Home* (p. 121-232)

March 2 Final Discussion  
**Paper #3 Due**



## **Special Accommodations**

If you require any accommodations for this course, as soon as possible please provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Determination Letter (provided to you by the Student Disability Services office) so that we may discuss how your accommodations may be implemented in this course.

The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the University's programs or services, you are encouraged to contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. To receive reasonable accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with Student Disability Services. Here is their contact information:

Address: 5501 S. Ellis Avenue

Chicago, IL 60637

Phone: (773) 702-6000

Email: [disabilities@uchicago.edu](mailto:disabilities@uchicago.edu)

<https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/>

## **Academic Resources**

College-level analysis and writing pose challenges to all incoming students. To help you meet these challenges, you may find it helpful to utilize some of the services provided by Student Services of The College. Various professional staff and advanced students are committed to helping you address academic challenges in a variety of ways. Visit their webpage at <https://college.uchicago.edu/student-services/mentoring> to learn about tutoring and mentoring options, guidance on study skills and time management, and one-on-one assistance to ensure that you are using the best possible strategies for success in your course work. You are also encouraged to avail yourself of writing resources offered by the writing center, including one-on-one writing tutoring: <https://writing-program.uchicago.edu/undergrads>. Please note that there are writing tutors who are trained in helping students for whom English is an additional language.

## **Academic Integrity**

*As per the university's policy:*

As students and faculty of the University of Chicago, we all belong to an academic community with high scholarly standards of which we are justly proud. Our community also holds certain fundamental ethical principles to which we are equally deeply committed. We believe it is contrary to justice, to academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit the statements or ideas or work of others as one's own. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University's disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously; punishments for committing them may range up to permanent expulsion from the University of Chicago. The College, therefore, expects that you will properly acknowledge your use of another's ideas, whether that use is by direct quotation or by paraphrase, however loose. In particular, if you consult any written source and either

directly or indirectly use what you find in that source in your own work, you must identify the author, title, and page number. If you have any doubts about what constitutes "use," consult your instructor and visit [college.uchicago.edu/policies-regulations/academic-integrity-student-conduct](http://college.uchicago.edu/policies-regulations/academic-integrity-student-conduct).

**Any instance of plagiarism will result in failure of the course.**