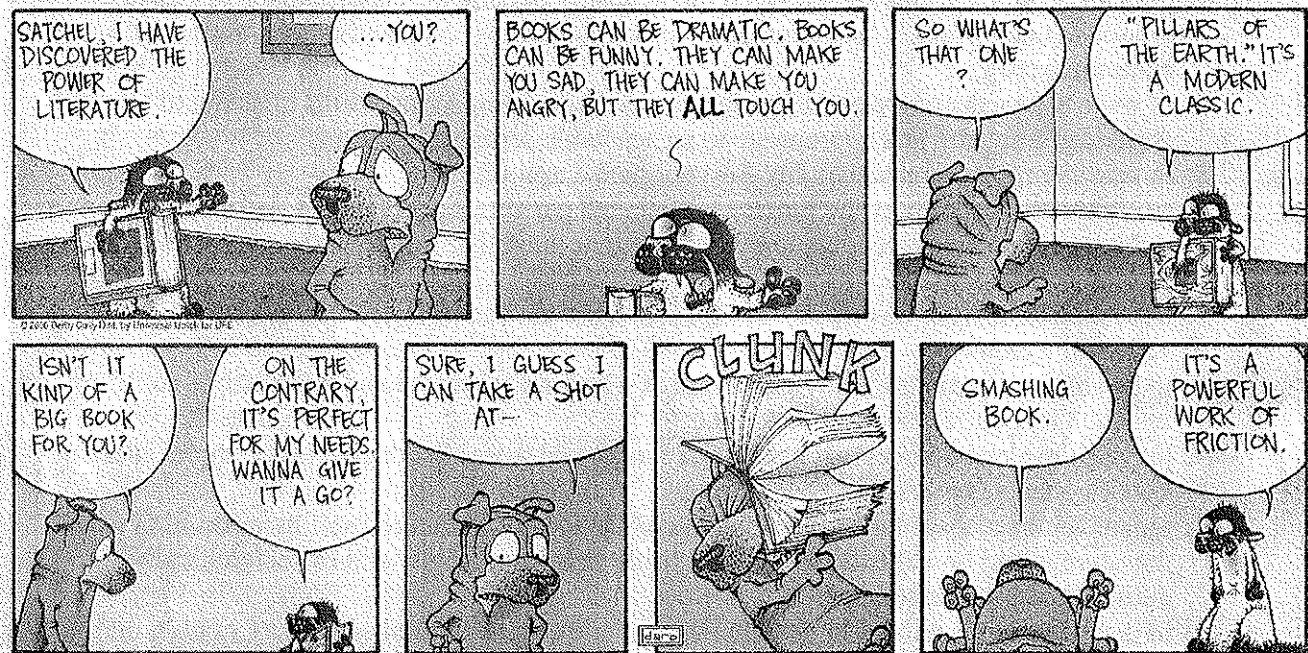


GET FUZZY

What Makes Great Literature Great?

FSP 101 07

Term: Fall 2013

Time: 2:00-3:20 p.m. MR

Room: SCP 116

Prof. G. Steinberg

Office: Bliss 129

Office Phone: 771-2106

Office Hours: 12:30-4:30 TF
and by appointment

TEXTBOOKS:

1. Homer, *The Odyssey* (Penguin, 1996), ISBN 0140268863
2. Virgil, *The Aeneid* (Penguin, 2006), ISBN 9780143106296
3. Statius, *The Thebaid* (Johns Hopkins, 2007), ISBN 0801886368

COURSE DESCRIPTION. What makes great literature great? What makes a classic a classic? Is there something in the literature itself, some quality, that makes it great? Is it great because it is “relatable” to me and my interests? In this course, we read a number of philosophers and theorists who have wrestled with what makes literature great. Then we read three authors from classical Greece and Rome, two of whom (Homer and Virgil) have “stood the test of time” as great authors (although Virgil’s reputation has slipped considerably in the last 100 years) and the third of whom (Statius) seems to have failed to last in the same way. We apply the theories from earlier in the semester to these three authors in order to try to understand and explain how or why literary works are great (or not).

GOALS. In terms of my goals for this course, I want you

1. to approach the world, information, and knowledge ever more critically, questioning surface appearances, received opinion, and authoritative answers,
2. to be ever more curious and engaged intellectually outside the classroom as well as in,
3. to use writing, research, and reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating,
4. to write essays that are clear, effective, correct (according to the norms of standard American English), and appropriate to an academic setting,
5. to take ever greater responsibility for your own learning,
6. to understand better how the literary, visual, and performing arts reflect and inspire the richness of human expression, and how language and other forms of expression convey meaning and story,
7. to be able to analyze how forms of expression are used to reflect, exalt, or challenge the values of a culture,
8. to be able to explain the many purposes for which art is created and the multiple contexts in which it acquires meaning and value,
9. to have developed perceptual habits and conceptual lenses conducive to the appreciation of specific media, genres, and styles,
10. to have pursued a sustained investigation of the idea of literature itself by examining what literature is and how it is culturally, politically, philosophically and/or sociologically defined and influenced, and
11. to demonstrate sensitivity to the concrete historicity and cultural specificity of texts and to the development of literary traditions, cultural values, modes of thought, and uses of language over time and across national boundaries.

REQUIREMENTS. This course has the following graded assignments:

1. three formal essays (worth, in order, 15%, 25%, and 35% of your final grade),
2. incidental assignments in the course schedule below, including thesis paragraphs and an interview assignment (worth 5% altogether), and
3. 10 response papers (worth 2% each, 20% altogether).

Your final grade will be based on the following scale: A = 93-100, A- = 90-92.9, B+ = 87-89.9, B = 83-86.9, B- = 80-82.9, C+ = 77-79.9, C = 73-76.9, C- = 70-72.9, D+ = 67-69.9, D = 60-66.9, and F = below 60.

RESPONSE PAPERS. In the course of the term, you are required to write 10 short, informal papers (about 2 pages each) on the readings for class from Homer, Virgil, and Statius. You may choose which readings you want to respond to, as long as you have completed 10 response papers by the end of the term. For each response paper, choose *one* of the following topics and respond to the reading assignment for the day with respect to the topic you've chosen (you should write at least once on each of these topics over the course of the term):

- In what ways does the day's reading assignment participate in acts of defamiliarization? How does it "transfer the usual perception of an object into the sphere of a new perception"? How does it make the familiar strange and difficult, new and present?
- In what ways is the day's reading assignment an Oedipal misreading of an earlier text? In what ways does it act as a creative correction or self-saving caricature? Is it the work of a heroic, "strong" poet? In what ways can it be read as "its poet's deliberate misinterpretation, *as a poet*, of a precursor poem or of poetry in general"? How does the misreading clear imaginative space for the author and give value to his writing?
- In terms of what functions(s), for what audience(s), and under what circumstance(s) does the day's reading assignment possess value? In what kind of personal economies is it valuable? What needs,

interests, and purposes does it satisfy or support? Do its satisfactions vary individually along a wide or narrow spectrum? How much are its satisfactions culturally channeled? How well does it continue to perform some desired/able functions for today's readers? Do today's desired/able functions seem to be the same as the desired/able functions it performed for its original audience?

- In what way is the day's reading assignment "American"/male or "un-American"/female in its values and appeal? Does it intensify the "cultural essence" and convey "national universals" of male America? Does it represent "complete self-definition," the "quest for unencumbered space," the "unmitigatedly destructive pressure [of society] on individuality," or other male American literary myths? Does it portray women as icons of "the encroaching, constricting, destroying society" or as "the all-nurturing mother, the all-passive bride"? Why would it appeal (or not) in the economy of the male American literary marketplace?
- How might the day's reading assignment assist a reader in resolving a specific existential dilemma? Is it more like a fairy tale (optimistic) or like a myth (pessimistic)? Does it portray "superego demands in conflict with id-motivated action" (like myth) or "personality integration" (like fairy tale)?

Response papers will be graded Pass/Fail. I ask you to type them (so that they are easier for me to read), but they need not be a perfect, polished product. Rather, response papers should be just what their name says – a response. Think about one of the topics above; then, write a response. Don't worry about typos or comma splices or organization. Don't worry about answering every question I ask under the particular topic. In fact, focus on the one question that seems most interesting to you, and be as specific as you can, getting down as much as you can, as quickly as you can. Treat response papers more like a journal entry than like a formal paper. I don't want a five-paragraph theme. Rather, I want an exploration – as detailed and specific as possible – of the reading assignment for the day.

Normally, as long as you submit a response paper of suitable length, detail, and thoughtfulness (and as long as you turn it in a hard copy on time *in class* on the day of the reading assignment discussed in the paper), you will receive all the points that the response paper is worth (i.e., 100% = A+++). The purpose of the response papers is

1. to help you in your preparation for class discussion,
2. to help me see where you're struggling with the theories and readings for class,
3. to help you develop your intellectual independence and your confidence as a reader/writer,
4. to help you explore and apply the theory we read, and
5. to help you generate ideas for your longer, more formal papers.

You may submit more than 10 response papers in the course of the semester (to make up for any response papers that do not receive a grade of Pass), but no matter how many extra response papers you submit, you will not receive credit for more than 10 total. **You may not submit more than one response paper on a single day, nor may you submit a response paper for a day that you are absent from class – absolutely *no* exceptions.**

PAPER 1, PAPER 2, and PAPER 3. You are required to write three formal essays for this class. The first of these essays will be on the *Odyssey*; the second will be on the *Aeneid*; and the third will be on the *Thebaid*. For each essay, choose an episode, scene, or passage from the text assigned for that essay. The passage you choose must be one that we have not discussed in class but that seems very important to you in terms of the significance or value of the work as a whole. **Compose an essay of 4-6 pages in which you argue a clear, specific, and interesting thesis about the passage and its significance in the work.** As you think about what to write, I strongly recommend that you use your response papers as a starting place. Once you've chosen a focus for your paper, look very carefully at your passage. Look for details that reveal or illustrate the significance of the passage in terms of your chosen focus. Use those details as evidence and illustration in your paper, but also use evidence from other parts of the work (to put your

passage in the context of the work as a whole). You may also refer back to Homer when writing about Virgil or back to Homer and/or Virgil when writing about Statius, but you are not required to do so. You need not use outside sources for this paper (other than Homer, Virgil, and/or Statius); in fact, I would encourage you *not* to use outside sources (because I'd rather hear what *you* think than what some published scholar thinks). If you do use outside sources, you are responsible for documenting those sources appropriately, using any recognized documentation format (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.). The class meeting before the first two papers are due, bring to class a thesis paragraph (a draft first paragraph of your paper or just a paragraph that describes what you plan to write about), and your classmates and I will give you feedback on your proposed thesis.

Your papers will be graded based on the following criteria:

1. Does the paper have a clear, specific thesis? Does the thesis offer an interesting perspective or “hook” that is provocative without being gimmicky or offensive?
2. Does the paper’s analysis progress logically? Does the paper have a clear and consistent overall organization that relates all the ideas of the paper together in support of the thesis (rather than simply a list of random observations without relation to one another or to the thesis)? Does the paper have appropriate transitions to aid the reader in following the paper’s logic (rather than weak transitions, such as “The first...,” “Another...,” and “...also...”)?
3. Does the paper provide relevant, concrete evidence and logically persuasive reasons for every assertion?
4. Does the paper exhibit confidence and insight when analyzing passages from the book not discussed in class?
5. Does the introduction to the paper offer an interesting, helpful preview of the content, logic, and organization of the paper?
6. Is factual information in the paper accurate?
7. Is the writing in the paper clear, effective, correct (according to the norms of standard American English), and appropriate to an academic setting?

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY. Academic dishonesty is any attempt by a student to gain academic advantage through dishonest means, to submit, as his or her own, work which has not been done by him/her or to give improper aid to another student in the completion of an assignment. Such dishonesty would include, but is not limited to: submitting as his/her own a project, paper, report, test, or speech copied from, partially copied, or paraphrased from the work of another (whether the source is printed, under copyright, or in manuscript form). Credit must be given for words quoted or paraphrased. The rules apply to any academic dishonesty, whether the work is graded or ungraded, group or individual, written or oral. TCNJ’s academic integrity policy is available on the web at <http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/viewPolicy.php?docId=7642>.

ATTENDANCE. Regular attendance is a virtual necessity for successful completion of this class. Class discussion constitutes important, useful preparation for your graded work. If you miss a class, you will essentially lose out on that day’s contribution to your preparation, since it is never really possible to reproduce or recapture the dynamics and flow of information for a missed class meeting (even if you get notes from someone). If, however, you positively must miss a class, I expect you to find out what you missed and to come fully prepared – without excuses – to the next class meeting. For more information on the College’s attendance policy, please go to <http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/viewPolicy.php?docId=8162>.

ACCOMMODATIONS. The College of New Jersey prohibits discrimination against any student on the basis of physical or mental disability or perceived disability. The College will also provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations to enable students with disabilities to participate in the life of the campus community. Individuals with disabilities are responsible for reporting and supplying documentation verifying their disability, and requests for accommodations must be initiated through the Office of

Differing Abilities Services (Eickhoff Hall 159). If you require special assistance, I will make every reasonable effort to accommodate your needs and to create an environment where your special abilities will be respected. For more information, please go to <http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/viewPolicy.php?docId=8082>.

OFFICE HOURS. My office is in Bliss Hall 129, and my office hours this term are 12:30-4:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Fridays. If you cannot see me during these office hours, feel free as needed to call my office (771-2106) or to talk to me before or after class to arrange an appointment at another time. You may also contact me by email (through Canvas), or you may leave a message for me in my box at the English department offices in Bliss 124. Email is generally the fastest way to contact me in an emergency.

I may, on occasion, want to e-mail students in class. I generally only have access to your TCNJ e-mail addresses, however. As a result, if you regularly use an e-mail address other than your TCNJ address, I recommend that you have mail from your TCNJ address forwarded to the address you use more regularly. That way, if I e-mail your TCNJ address, my message will be forwarded to your other address automatically.

LANGUAGES ACROSS THE CURRICULUM. A quarter-unit (one-credit) Languages Across the Curriculum independent study (LAC 391) may be added to this course for those students who have intermediate level proficiency in Classical Greek or Latin and who wish to complement the work in this course by utilizing their language skills. LAC 391 (P/U grading only) will be noted on the student’s transcript. Please visit the LAC website at <http://internationalstudies.pages.tcnj.edu/student-resources/languages/> or contact Dr. Deborah Compte at dcompte@tcnj.edu for more information. Students must meet with Dr. Compte to enroll in LAC 391 by Wednesday, September 4.

COURSE SCHEDULE. The schedule below is subject to revision at the discretion of the professor. I recommend that you check this online syllabus regularly over the course of the term. Changes and updates after the first week of classes will be indicated in red.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Assignment</i>
R Aug 29	Introductions
M Sep 2	NO CLASS (Labor Day)
T Sep 3	Interview 5 or 6 people on your floor (not anyone that someone else from class has already interviewed) and ask the following four questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you ever had a literature class? 2. What are some of the literary works that you remember reading in literature class? 3. Have you ever read any famous literary works on your own? If so, what, for example? 4. What would you say great literature is? What seems to define great literature? Bring their responses to class today. In addition, read “ <u>The Red Wheelbarrow</u> ” and “ <u>Batter My Heart</u> ”
R Sep 5	“Shklovsky” (available in <u>Canvas</u> under “Files”)
M Sep 9	“Bloom” (available in <u>Canvas</u> under “Files”; focus on pp. 19-45)
R Sep 12	“Herrnstein-Smith” (available in <u>Canvas</u> under “Files”; focus on sections 2 and 4)
M Sep 16	“Baym” and “Bettelheim” (both available in <u>Canvas</u> under “Files”; I apologize in advance for the poor quality of both these pdf’s)
R Sep 19	<i>Odyssey</i> , Books 1-4; click here for a sample of the <i>Odyssey</i> in its original language

M Sep 23	<i>Odyssey</i> , Books 5-8
R Sep 26	<i>Odyssey</i> , Books 9-12
M Sep 30	<i>Odyssey</i> , Books 13-16
R Oct 3	<i>Odyssey</i> , Books 17-20
M Oct 7	<i>Odyssey</i> , Books 21-24
T Oct 8	Thesis Paragraph for <u>PAPER 1 DUE in Canvas</u>
R Oct 10	<i>Aeneid</i> , Books 1 & 2; click here for a sample of the <i>Aeneid</i> in its original language and here for a list of Greek and Roman god equivalents
M Oct 14	<i>Aeneid</i> , Books 3 & 4
R Oct 17	<u>PAPER 1 DUE in Canvas before class</u>
M Oct 21	<i>Aeneid</i> , Books 5 & 6
R Oct 24	<i>Aeneid</i> , Books 7 & 8
M Oct 28	NO CLASS (Fall Break)
R Oct 31	<i>Aeneid</i> , Books 9 & 10
M Nov 4	<i>Aeneid</i> , Books 11 & 12
T Nov 5	Thesis Paragraph for <u>PAPER 2 DUE in Canvas</u>
R Nov 7	<i>Thebaid</i> , Books 1 & 2; click here for a sample of the <i>Thebaid</i> in its original language
M Nov 11	<i>Thebaid</i> , Books 3 & 4
R Nov 14	<u>PAPER 2 DUE in Canvas before class</u>
M Nov 18	<i>Thebaid</i> , Books 5 & 6
R Nov 21	<i>Thebaid</i> , Books 7 & 8
M Nov 25	<i>Thebaid</i> , Books 9 & 10
R Nov 28	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)
M Dec 2	<i>Thebaid</i> , Books 11 & 12
W Dec 4	FSP Symposium (Brower Student Center)
R Dec 5	Thesis Paragraph for <u>PAPER 3 DUE in class</u>
Finals Period	<u>PAPER 3 DUE in Canvas</u>

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